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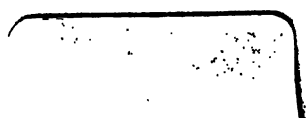
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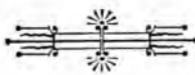
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The  
Beechwood   
 Tragedy.

A TALE OF THE CHICKAHOMINY.

BY M. J. HAW.

J. W. RANDOLPH & ENGLISH, PUBLISHERS,  
RICHMOND, VA.  
1889.



THE  
BEECHWOOD TRAGEDY.

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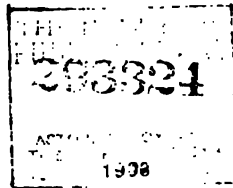
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## PREFACE.

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In 1863, in "The Magnolia Weekly," the first literary weekly issued in the Southern Confederacy, I published my first story, not too long an article for one number of the paper, though, perhaps from scarcity of original matter, it was extended through two.

Glancing over it long afterwards, I recognized that there was in it sufficient plot to be extended through a much longer narrative, and conceived the notion of rewriting it, expanding and elaborating by additional characters and incidents. At irregular intervals, in such fragments of time as I could snatch from the arduous labors of a very busy life, I have done this, retaining only the outlines and the name of the original story, and the names and descriptions of the principal characters.

In offering "The Beechwood Tragedy" to the public, in the hope that through its publication I may be able to obtain leisure for better work, I am constrained to claim indulgence for the many defects that, from the very unfavorable circumstances attending its composition, must mar the work.

M. J. HAW.



# THE BEECHWOOD TRAGEDY.

A TALE OF THE CHICKAHOMINY.

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By M. J. HAW.

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## CHAPTER I.

It was a lovely day in the early autumn, a delightful season in Tidewater Virginia. A light frost had touched the foliage of the deciduous trees with every shade of red, yellow, purple and russet; and these tints, mingled with the dark rich hues of the evergreens, formed a blending of colors wonderfully brilliant and harmonious. The cornfields, stripped of the waving blades that had fluttered in the summer breezes, showed serried ranks of yellowish brown stalks bristling with bursting ears; the smooth wheatfields were faintly tinted with the delicate green of the young grain just springing from the ground; and the broad level meadows, whose sward, still green, was flecked with the purplish blossoms of the aftermath, were thickly dotted with cone-shaped hay stacks. Over all was the magic October light—a golden summer brightness softened by the thinnest veil of purple haze—lending a fineness of outline and a rare beauty of tint to every object upon which it fell.

In any light, the landscape would have been pleasing; to-day it was beautiful. A mimic plateau sloped by a waving line of gentle swelling hills to a broad and fertile valley, across which a river showed its winding course by silvery flashes through the gorgeous fringe of trees and bushes skirting its low banks. Three sides of the horizon were bounded by masses of the bright colored forest, and, on the other side, a low range of hills was outlined against a pale, blue sky, flecked with pearly clouds.

On the hill jutting farthest out into the valley, stood an ancient homestead, a fair type of those rural homes which, in the early days of the American Republic, cradled the many illustrious sons of the Old Dominion. Though the large, rambling old house of dark red brick was by no means an imposing structure, it had a comfortable, homelike look; and the high roof with dormer windows, the numerous wings and shady porches gave it a picturesque appearance.

Large oak, maple, poplar and walnut trees, majestic relics of the "forest primeval," shaded the house and stood in clumps over the wide lawn. Broad walks of white gravel wound among these, across the smooth green turf, dotted to-day with the scarlet and gold of autumn leaves, ever and anon fluttering down through the still bright air.

At the back of the house, a large garden, separated from the yard

by a closely trimmed hedge of dwarf box-wood, led by three terraces to the river valley below. A wide graveled walk, broken by low flights of stone steps, ran midway through the garden. The upper terrace was a beautiful parterre, boasting such a rare collection of shrubs and plants as is seldom found in a remote country place, and ornamented with a picturesque summer house and several pretty arbors. The middle terrace was devoted to fruits of choice and rare varieties; and an interminable variety of vegetables, and of herbs medicinal, culinary and odoriferous occupied the lowest and broadest terrace.

Around the west end of the yard stood the various offices—kitchen, laundry, dairy, meat house, weaving house, &c. Several hundred yards eastward of the dwelling, was a large barn flanked by stables, corn houses and carriage house. Along the top of a breezy hill, at a convenient distance, were grouped the "quarters," each cabin with its garden, pig-pen and hen-house.

On this dreamy autumn afternoon, there were about the place various signs of quiet and happy rural life. A herd of cattle was grazing in the distant meadow, and a flock of sheep lay basking on a sunny hill-side, while a dozen hungry calves bleated in the farm pen, and as many frolicksome colts chased one another around the clover lot.

Most of the "hands" were engaged in gathering corn in the low grounds and hauling it in wagons and tumbrel carts to the barn, before the open door of which it was being piled in a huge heap. Around this "corn pile," a score of negro women and girls were seated, tearing off the yellow shuck from the corn and throwing the full, white ears into the barn; and this monotonous labor was enlivened by a lively exchange of plantation and neighborhood gossip, interspersed with ghost stories and exciting and wildly improbable narratives of religious experiences.

In the orchard, the coachman and the gardener, assisted by the housemaids, were busy gathering the crimson wine-sap and purplish limbertwigs into huge white-oak baskets, which, for transportation to the house, were being placed in a cart drawn by a sleepy looking mule.

Between the barn and the dwelling, an ox-cart piled up with wood was making its snail like progress to the wood-pile behind the kitchen, the driver droning a negro melody as he shamled beside his creeping team. The cow-boy, in coarse blue trousers and ragged shirt, was driving the milch cows across the field to the barn, with a gang of little negroes at his heels, to whom he was describing how he had run down and captured the desperately frightened young hare he held dangling by its hind legs.

All the comfort, thrift, hearty life and cheerful activity of the surroundings were reflected in the bright face, robust figure, alert manner and energetic movements of the master of the estate, who, mounted on a handsome blooded sorrel, rode briskly from the cornfield to the barn and thence to the orchard, inspecting, directing, commending or reproving, as occasion demanded.

The fine order of the whole estate, with its excellent buildings and enclosures, clean, well tilled and productive fields, fat cattle, fine teams, well fed and comfortably clad laborers, mutely declared him a model farmer; and the brightening of the negroes' countenances as he approached them, as well as the cheerful alacrity with which they obeyed his slightest command, proclaimed him a kind master. The expression of his frank, genial face, and the glance of his kind, honest blue eyes disclosed the character and disposition of a fortunate, useful and popular man.

It was plain that nature had fitted him both to do good in this life and to get good out of it. The eager interest of his manner and the beaming content of his countenance gave evidence of a degree of satisfaction and pleasure in his pursuits by no means common in this disjointed world of ours.

Indeed, "the lines had fallen unto him in pleasant places, and he had a goodly heritage." A fine ancestral estate of broad and fertile fields, a retinue of faithful and attached servants, and a true and loving wife, formed a crown of blessings perfect but for one want—he had no child.

But even this disappointment was atoned for by two adopted children, who filled his heart with love, his home with joy and his life with aim and interest.

Leonora Wyndham, his wife's niece, had come to them in her earliest infancy, both of her parents having died within the first year of her life. His own nephew, Herbert Lindsay, had been a member of his family since the death of the boy's widowed mother four years ago. In person, mind and character, these two young people were all that their devoted foster parents could desire.

Leonora, who was just eighteen, had been educated at home by an accomplished governess, from whom she had reluctantly parted a few months since; and Herbert had lately graduated with distinction at the University of Virginia. To render the life dawning before this adopted brother and sister exceptionally happy, every essential factor seemed to have been secured. Richly endowed by nature, refined by culture, blessed with fond domestic ties, fine social advantages and the substantial gifts of fortune, to human speculation, the career opening before them promised to be as happy and brilliant as the warm wishes and fond hopes of their uncle and aunt loved to depict it.

What Herbert and Nora themselves hoped to be and to enjoy in the noontide fullness of an existence whose morning was so cloudless, every young and happy soul knows full well. What they found of joy and sorrow and of love and labor in the coming years, the following pages will tell. Alas! like so many who have gone before them and so many who shall follow after them,

"They slept and dreamed that life is beauty;  
They woke and found that *life is duty*."

The dreamy stillness of the hazy light and mellow air without seemed to have cast a spell upon the mansion at Ingleside, such profound quiet reigned within and around it this bright October afternoon. Mrs. Lindsay, as was her daily custom at this hour, had gone to the weaving house to inspect the tasks of the two women employed there; and only Herbert and Nora remained indoors. Through a tall glass door opening upon the yard, and which stands invitingly ajar, we will enter and make their acquaintance.

The apartment to which this door admits us is large and lofty, and wainscoted with oak darkened by age. A high, carved oak mantel overhangs a capacious fireplace, which is garnished with tall andirons and a massive fender of brightly burnished brass. The wall-paper is amber color with a delicate tracery of crimson and gold; and the same colors predominate in the soft, thick carpet. Heavy crimson curtains, over others of white lace, drape the windows, and shut out the sunlight, except a few golden beams that rest cheerily on the fine old mahogany

furniture and the rich crimson covers of sofas and chairs. But most do these sportive sunbeams delight to play over the lustrous surfaces of several tall and narrow mirrors in carved walnut frames, which, with a few family portraits and a number of dark, mellow-looking steel engravings, adorn the lofty walls. Upon the high mantel they are brightly reflected by a pair of massive silver candlesticks and a small bronze bust of Washington, between which stand some old and fine china vases of fresh flowers. Another vase of choice roses and exotics shed fragrance around a portfolio of drawings, some richly bound volumes of poetry and a handsome and modern argand lamp on the centre table.

Though the room is now vacant, a freshly-gathered rose laid between the leaves of a volume of poems, and the open piano strewn with sheet music, betoken recent occupancy. Through the open door we catch the sound of a slight movement in the adjoining room, and following this sound, we find ourselves in an apartment which is architecturally the counterpart of the one we have just left. A combination of furniture suitable both to a library and a family sitting room, discloses the double usage of this apartment. The learned majesty of the tall book-cases and high-backed library chairs is relieved by a cozy lounge, two light sewing chairs and two small work tables covered with richly embroidered drapery, upon which rest handsome work-boxes, the one of ebony, the other of satin-wood, inlaid with pearl and silver. And among the glaring maps, with their blue wastes of seas and oceans and their green and red and yellow continents and islands, hang sundry gilt-framed pictures, done in water colors, or faded tapestry work, by female members of the family, whose busy, cunning fingers have long been dust. A pretty French clock on the mantel tells the flight of the hours, and is flanked by silver candlesticks and antique vases of freshly-gathered roses and dahlias. On the mantel and on brackets in the corners of the room are disposed various Indian relics, principally stone tomahawks and arrow-heads, which are very abundant in the valley of the Chickahominy.

The open shutters and parted curtains let in the mellow light and disclose glimpses of the lovely prospect without; the broad and smiling valley, with the waving line of the bordering hills beyond meeting and almost melting into the soft sky. But the fine weather and pleasant landscape seem lost upon the present occupants of the library.

Herbert, seated by the table, with one elbow resting lightly on it, is intently reading. Leonora, in a low sewing-chair by the window, bends in profound absorption over a piece of fancy work, her lap and the small table at her side being covered with skeins of bright-colored silk and scraps of gay satin and velvet, from among which she pauses sometimes to make a selection, then goes on with her embroidery, without even a glance at her companion, or at the smiling garden beneath the window, or the bright autumn landscape beyond.

Herbert is by no means so absorbed in his perusal of Tasso. Often, without changing his position in the least or making the slightest movement which could attract her attention, he raises his eyes to Nora's face and continues some moments looking at her with an expression of ardent admiration, wistful tenderness, and meditative inquiry.

As he sits thus, earnestly contemplating the fair, bowed face before him, he himself presents an inviting subject for critical scrutiny. With his head turned a little aside and bent over the book before him, the light from the opposite window throwing out his clearly cut profile in fine relief against the dark lining of the chair, he shows to unusual advan-

tage. But even in this favorable light and becoming attitude he cannot be called handsome.

His features, though delicate and clearly cut, are not beautiful, except the mouth, which is finely chiseled and expressive of rare tenderness and sensibility. His finely-formed head, broad, open brow, and the expression of his clear dark gray eyes, betoken unusual intelligence. His rather dark cheek is, as yet, as smooth as a girl's; and this, with the slightness of his well-knit figure, his gentle, meditative expression, and his soft, quiet manners, make him appear even more youthful than he is. Altogether, his appearance is not only agreeable but attractive, for there is in his countenance, bearing and manner a rare blending of gentleness and manliness, dignity and simplicity, intelligence and refinement, which more than atone for the want of physical beauty.

With his eyes fixed admiringly upon the fair girl at the window, Herbert is mentally repeating some lines of a fugitive poem he had that morning seen in a magazine, and which had impressed him as so finely descriptive of Nora that he had taken the trouble to commit them to memory :

"The waving lines and pliant grace,  
"The softly beaming soul-lit face.  
"Naught but a magic pen could trace—

"The classic head, the chestnut hair  
"Waving above a brow so fair  
"That purity seems written there ;—

"The lips where rosebuds seem to grow.  
"And on the smooth round cheek a glow  
"Like morning's flush on Alpine snow ;—

"The eyes so tender and so true,  
"Their deep and soft and limpid blue  
"Like sapphires wet with morning dew."

Nora's dark blue merino dress, with a narrow white frill at the neck and wrists, throws out the exquisite fairness and delicate bloom of her complexion in dazzling contrast; and her graceful attitude, bending slightly forward, displays to perfection the fine contour of her Grecian head and pure oval face. Her smooth, white forehead is perfect in form, and no curving could be more exquisite than the arch of her delicate, sensitive nostrils. Her other features, though delicate and pretty, are not regularly beautiful.

Hers is pre-eminently a beauty of coloring and expression, the first being unrivaled for blended brightness and delicacy, the second of a mingled frankness and intelligence, gentleness and vivacity perfectly inimitable. In her rather tall figure is displayed that rare combination of graceful slenderness and beautiful roundness so finely portrayed in Powers' statue of the Greek Slave.

Her movements, so light and rapid, and at the same time so smoothly flowing, express the very poetry of motion. In the varied tones of her voice, so soft, clear, and finely modulated, there is a sort of magnetic resonance which gives a charm to her lightest word. Countenance, movements, manners and language, all in the finest harmony, give expression to a nature singularly earnest and simple, truthful and loving, refined and intelligent. Her highest beauty, though, is in the animated play of her wonderfully mobile and expressive features. And when one of

her radiant smiles parts the fresh lips over the perfect teeth, and the limpid, deep blue eyes sparkle with tenderness and joyousness, she is at her very loveliest.

How very, very lovely that is, few know so well or feel so keenly as her adopted brother. Even in its present repose and pre-occupation, her face is lovely enough to make him forget the gorgeous imagery and stirring scenes of the "Jerusalem Delivered." He forgets even that he has a book in his hand. Slowly and insensibly his fingers relax their hold, and the volume falls to the floor.

Nora is just pausing to clip her thread; she looks up at the sound of the falling book and says:

"Well, Herbert, have you finished your book? Or does your conscience smite you for having left me so long to my own devices, and are you inclined to be less literary and more companionable during the rest of the afternoon?"

"What a charge!" he repeated. "How can you say I left you to your own devices, when you gave up your whole time and attention so entirely to your embroidery as to completely ignore my presence. I was forced in self-defence to take up a book, which I will gladly lay by for a walk or a conversation, whichever you prefer."

"Let it be a walk, then. It is folly to remain indoors when everything is so lovely without. The sunset, I know, will be beautiful this evening. But wait one moment. My cigar-case is nearly done; and I want your opinion as to which would be better in this wreath," pointing with her slender finger to a bare space amid a delicate mass of embroidery, "a pretty suggestive motto, or the name of the future owner. Also, please trace the letters for me in German text."

"Let it be the name, by all means, if I am to be intrusted with the tracing of it; for I assure you my curiosity is much excited by your intense absorption in this pretty trifle; and I have indulged in some curious speculations about its probable destination."

"Perhaps I intend it as a present for you," she said laughingly.

"Hardly for me, as you well know I never smoke; and you would scarcely destine such an elaborate work of art to 'waste its sweetness on the desert air' of my old trunk, where I keep my dearest treasures."

"Well, sir, I do not approve of idle curiosity, and I shall not encourage it in you by putting the name, but leave you to speculate at leisure upon its probable destination. Trace me a motto instead in your best style."

"But what motto?" he asked with a look and tone half earnest, half teasing. "How am I to know without further enlightenment what sentiment you wish the motto to express?"

"Oh! anything you please; something short, expressing any pretty sentiment of friendship."

"Friendship?" he queried, with a look and tone that made her blush.

"Certainly," she replied. "Whom could I design it for but a friend?"

"Only a friend, is he?" Herbert went on in a bantering tone, but with anxious concern betraying itself in the scrutinizing gaze he bent on Nora's averted face. "Really, I was inclined to think the future possessor of this pretty cigar-case might be something more than a friend. I could not believe that a collection of strings and rags could intrinsically possess such attractions as to divert your attention through a whole after-

noon from so interesting a personage as your humble servant ; and so I was driven to the conclusion that your interest in the affair mainly centred in the use for which it is designed—that while weaving the bright threads into a form of beauty, you might be thinking whose eye it would gladden, and ”—

“Hush your nonsense,” she exclaimed, smiling through her blushes. “Trace the motto quickly, and let us go out into the garden ; if we stand dawdling here much longer we will lose the sunset.”

“At least you will tell me in what language you would prefer the inscription to be. Will you have it in Latin, Greek or Hebrew ? for, as Dr. Johnson says, we will not, of course, *disgrace* it by an *English* one.”

“No Hebrew for me, nor Greek either. In fact, I doubt whether you could compose a line in either. If the language of Shakspeare and Milton is beneath the dignity of your muse, you may make use of that of Virgil or of Lope de Vega.”

“Spanish !” he repeated in a tone which covered her with confusion.

“No, you need not write anything at all, she said, hastily taking the cigar-case from him and locking it away in the drawer of her work table.

“I don’t know what can be the matter with you, Herbert. You have not been like yourself since you got back from the University. Have your academic successes turned your head ; or is it that much learning hath made you mad ?”

“My head is all right,” he replied.

“Then your heart is all wrong ; for you are getting perfectly hateful—the worse tease I ever saw.”

Passing into the hall, she took a garden hat from the hat-rack and went out into the garden, followed closely by Herbert, whose step was as light and his carriage almost as graceful as her own.

Lightly and rapidly she flitted from flower to flower, admiring the beauty of some, inhaling the fragrance of others, and often calling upon Herbert to inspect something she found particularly curious and beautiful. However rapid and erratic her movements, he kept closely at her side. Although his responses were ready, he had an air of abstraction, so absorbed was he in watching Nora’s airy motions, and the graceful postures she assumed in reaching up to some tall shrub or bending down over some lovely floweret.

At last, when she had traversed every walk and inspected every flower-bed, she paused, and from a basket of flowers she had gathered for the tea-table, selected a half-blown white rose and some citron-aloes, which she fastened in Herbert’s buttonhole. Next she pinned a cluster of blush roses in her own corsage and in her hair. Then they went and stood upon the stone steps leading from the upper terrace to the fruit garden, and looked out upon the broad valley lighted up by the setting sun.

It was, as Nora had predicted, a beautiful sunset. A few light, feathery clouds in the west formed a gorgeous drapery, pearl, violet and rose, around the sinking orb, whose slanting rays cast soft, fantastic shadows upon the still landscape. Reflecting the sunset clouds, the river showed glintings of purple and gold here and there upon its silvery surface. The light blue shading of the distant hills was deepening to purple in the evening light ; and the brilliant tinting of the forest glowed with a gem-like lustre through the crystalline brightness and indescribable softness of the witching October sunshine.

Nora’s intense ideality made her keenly alive to every form of beauty ; and the refined simplicity of her tastes and habits made her an

ardent lover of nature. She seemed to drink in the beauty of the autumn landscape and the gorgeous sunset with a sort of delicious intoxication. With clasped hands and parted lips, her eyes deepening to a dark violet, her cheeks flushed to the hue of the damask rose, her face glowing with a refined and intense delight, she stood gazing from earth to sky and from sky to earth.

But Herbert, in whom the æsthetic faculty was as highly developed as in his lovely companion, much as he loved fair landscapes and beautiful sunsets, this evening had no eye for either. His whole soul was in the fervid gaze that seemed to devour the radiant face and graceful form before him.

Presently, with a faint gasp such as accompanies recovered respiration, she turned to her companion and said :

"Did you ever see anything so beautiful, Herbert? It is too lovely."

Looking into her eloquent and glowing face, he could scarcely restrain the impulse to tell her that, in his eyes, she was far more beautiful than earth or sky ; than any created thing in the heavens above or the earth beneath had ever been or ever could be.

As her eye met his, an expression of questioning surprise and uneasy perplexity swept over her features ; and, seeing this, his eyes fell, and a deep blush mounted to his temples. He could not tell her yet—she was not prepared to hear how much he loved her. For if her heart answered to his, it was not thus that her eyes would respond to his ardent, tell-tale glances.

There was an awkward pause of a moment before he replied to Nora. Then he said in his habitual tone :

"It is indeed beautiful. I never saw a finer sunset."

"How still and peaceful, how thrilling with beauty and bliss all nature seems," she said, her eyes wandering away over the shadowy landscape and sunset clouds—the beauty around her drawing her out of herself and making her in a moment forget the uneasy sensations excited by Herbert's unwonted looks and manner.

"And yet," she continued, musingly, "some people say this world is a sad and dismal place, so full of trouble and sorrow. I cannot believe it. Do you !"

"The world is so full of beauty," Herbert replied, "and the laws of nature are, in general, so beneficent in their aim and working, that I suppose most created beings, man included, must find a sort of joy in mere existence ; but in a world where sin infects all, and death is the ultimate lot of every creature, there must be much suffering and sorrow, dear Nora."

"Well, at any rate, it is very far away from us. I have never yet known any trouble or sorrow ; and I have always been so happy and so blest that grief and suffering seem to me very far away and unreal—almost impossibilities. Don't they seem so to you ?"

"No," he answered slowly, and with a touch of sadness in his tone, "they seem very real, and sometimes very near."

"Oh ! pardon me," she said, laying her hand caressingly on his arm, and bending on him a look of loving sympathy. "I forgot that it is only four years since you lost your mother ; and what a terrible grief was that ! I was too young to know anything about the death of my parents, and Uncle William and Aunt Lucy have filled their places so well that I have never missed them. With you it was different. You must have known great sorrow in the past, dear Herbert ; but the present is so full of joy

d blessing that you have every reason to expect great happiness in the future. Is it not so?"

He winced under her words, and his sensitive lip trembled slightly he replied:

"None of us can tell what is before us, Nora; and it is not wise to speculate upon the future. The Scriptures tell us, you know, to 'take no ought for to-morrow, but let to-morrow take thought for the things of elf; sufficient to the day is the evil thereof.' I might add that sufficient to *this* day is the *happiness* thereof. I am so well satisfied with my present situation and surroundings that as long as there is no change whatever, I will not quarrel with my fate."

"But there's the trouble," she said, falling into a moralizing vein; there must be change—always change in this world. Only God is unchangeless. Only think, we must grow old, and maybe lose our wealth, and certainly our friends. Yes, there are such things as trouble and sorrow; they are only too real. What a pity that there should be suffering in such a beautiful world!"

"But remember," said Herbert, "that there is a far more beautiful world where there is no suffering. In this precious fact lies our consolation and compensation."

The profound stillness was broken by the ringing cry of a pack of hounds, and looking in the direction whence it proceeded, Herbert and Nora saw a deer coming over the hill, closely pursued by a dozen dogs. Though running rapidly, it seemed much jaded, and the dogs were gaining fast upon it. It was pitiful to see the painful and desperate efforts it was making to escape the fangs of its bloodthirsty pursuers. Nora's companion was instantly excited.

"Poor thing!" she exclaimed, "how terrified it must be! What a shame to wantonly torture and slay the innocent creature; for none of its pursuers really need its flesh. But I hope it will escape them yet; for look! it is fast approaching the river."

"Don't be too sure, for even if it reaches the river, its escape is doubtful," said Herbert. "The dogs can swim as well as the deer. But it is so tired that I think it will be brought to bay before it reaches the river. Look! how its head drops, and how unsteady its gait is. The dogs are gaining on it rapidly. See! one has sprung upon its flank. The chase is very nearly over."

The deer paused in its flight to shake off its assailant, when two others sprang at its throat. The rest of the pack closed in upon it, and it was brought to bay in full sight of the excited spectators. Weary as the poor creature was, it defended itself desperately, and by a vigorous use of its horns and hoofs, more than one dog had been sent howling to the ear, when a more dangerous assailant appeared on the scene.

A hunter galloped rapidly over the hill, and halting his steed at the foot of it, threw his gun to his shoulder and fired. Almost simultaneously with the sharp report of the gun the deer sprang into the air, then fell to the earth, when the dogs sprang upon it.

The hunter rode forward, leaped to the ground, and driving off the dogs, plunged a dirk into the heart of the struggling creature. Then springing to his saddle, he raised a horn to his lips and blew a shrill blast.

As soon as the reverberations of the horn had ceased, Herbert waved his hat and cheered lustily. The huntsman turned in his saddle, waved

his cap in response, and bowed to his saddle-bow when he saw Nora's handkerchief fluttering in the air.

In a short time his companions in the chase appeared galloping over the hill. He lingered awhile among them to describe the closing scenes; then, content with the honors of the chase, he resigned the booty to them and galloped up to the garden at Ingleside.

Fastening his horse to a tree beside the garden, he leaped the palings at a bound, and with light, rapid strides, approached the party on the terrace.

The hunter was about Herbert's age, but much taller and stouter. In his superb, perfectly moulded figure were combined the strength and agility of Hercules, with the beauty and grace of Apollo. Features of perfect shape and regularity, and large, intensely brilliant black eyes formed a face of dazzling beauty. Clustering, silky curls of raven blackness covered a beautiful head, whose regal poise gave a princely air to the whole person. A full, curling moustache, a deep, rich voice, and genial, cordial manners completed the fascinations of the young sportsman.

"You cruel creature!" cried Nora, as he approached; "it has nearly broken my heart to see that poor deer run down and killed."

"I, too, have a grievance," said Herbert, "a charge of Punic faith. You promised to let me know the first time you went deer-hunting."

"And so I would have done had I known of it myself; but this chase was entirely accidental. I had ridden over to Selwyn on business, and while I was talking with Mr. Weston one of the servants ran in and said he had just seen a deer in the cornfield. Several of my dogs had followed me, and Weston's pack was in the yard; so we took the guns, which were already loaded, mounted our horses and went to look for the deer. Just as we were riding off, Will Christian and James Johnson came up and they joined us."

"We soon struck the trail and had a beautiful run through Selwyn, Oaklawn and Ingleside. I wish you had been along."

"That was a tight stretch you gave Pluto through the soft ground of the wheat field—a bad preparation for the Tournament. Are you not afraid it will make him stiff?"

"No danger of that; Pluto is too well used to such exercise. Did you notice the dogs—how splendidly Brilliant ran? I believe he'll make a better dog than his mother, Die Vernon; and she was worth her weight in gold. Weston has just offered me two of the best dogs in the pack for him."

"Of course you won't trade," said Herbert. "I never saw finer running than he did this evening. Don seemed to be running well, too; and Victor and Rose were not far behind; but I did not see Blanche and Belle."

"No; they were not along. The other dogs were Weston's, and very fine ones they are."

"I am really anxious to see Trumpet and Remus in a deer chase," said Herbert. "Uncle William and I put them on the trail of a fox that had killed a turkey in the orchard, and they soon ran it into its hole."

"Oh! now you two have got upon the subject of dogs and hunting," exclaimed Nora, "and there will be no rational conversation this evening. I do not believe men ever get thoroughly civilized. Even in the best of them, there is some trace of the original savagery, as is evinced in their passion for hunting—cruel, bloodthirsty creatures! Did you notice the beautiful sunset this evening, Russell? Herbert and I were admir-

ing and enjoying it when the horrid yelping of your dogs disturbed the stillness of the scene, and the slaying of the deer marred all its beauty.

"I cannot say that I particularly observed the sunset," the young man replied. "Rapid riding is not very favorable to the contemplation of the beauties of nature. But I did notice the exceeding beauty of the woods on my way to Selwyn, and remarked how well the wheat is looking since the rain."

"Did you ever see our garden looking so pretty?" asked Nora. "Just see how perfect the chrysanthemums are. Sometimes they are injured by the frost, but so far it has not touched them."

"They are beautiful, and the roses and dahlias, too. The garden looks as fresh and gay as in the early summer. You and Bertha are looking very gay and festive, too. Pray may I not have a rose for my button-hole?"

"Certainly; help yourself," she replied, offering him the basket.

"No, I believe not. Did Herbert help himself to that delicate white rose-bud? and did his clumsy fingers give it that artistic set on the lapel of his coat?"

"No; I gathered it and pinned it on."

"Then you must gather me one too, and pin it on my coat."

"Very well. Will this do?" plucking a rose from a bush beside her.

"No; I do not like yellow. Why may I not have a white rose?"

"Because it would not suit your style."

"Pray, why not? And why does a white rose suit Bertie's style?"

"Because the white rose looks so pure; and Herbert is so good."

"Then I suppose I am not good enough to wear a white rose?"

"Oh! not that exactly; but white is not becoming to a person so dark as you."

"What, then, may I ask, is becoming to my peculiar style of ugliness?"

"Yellow or red."

"Then give me a red rose, please."

She plucked a red rose and pinned it on his lapel; but he said it was placed too high. Then when she fastened it lower down, he declared it was too low. When the third adjustment failed to give satisfaction, she saw through his ruse and declined to alter it.

Then, drawing his superb figure up to its fullest height, and assuming his most graceful attitude—his head a little raised and turned slightly aside to display its fine contour and the perfect profile—he asked archly,

"Is it becoming?"

She looked up into the glowing face whose radiant beauty fascinated her, and into the splendid dark eyes, beaming through whose laughing light was a passionate tenderness that thrilled her inmost soul. Her heart gave a great bound, then seemed to stand still. Her senses reeled in a delicious intoxication. Without her volition, almost without her consciousness, her beaming eyes told all her admiration and passionate love. His answering glance at once made her aware of this; and instantly her maidenly reserve took alarm. She felt a tinge of indignation that her lover should thus delight in making her feel his power.

Her face, which had at first flushed, then grown pale, again blushed rosy red, and turning away abruptly, she said with some embarrassment and a slight irritation,

"You vain creature! ask Herbert about that. I must go now and see if Tom has taken in my geraniums."

When she had gone, the two young men sat down on the steps of the terrace and began to discuss the approaching Tournament.

"It is certainly kind in Wilcox letting us have his house for the ball," said Russell. The Grove is the best place in the county for such an entertainment; the rooms are so large, and the hall is splendid for promenading."

"The place selected for the course is very well suited to the purpose, too," said Herbert. "But the riding will be very tiresome, I fear; it will take so long to get through, with twenty knights in the ring."

"Not so long as you think, Bertie, for we are all good riders except the Colonel. If he don't spoil all the fun by breaking his neck, I shall be glad."

"Is Theodore Walker going to ride?" asked Herbert. "Tom Harrison told me he had withdrawn on account of some disagreement with the managing committee."

"Not he! Theo wouldn't miss such an opportunity of showing off for the world. He got angry because we would not let him have the whole management, and threatened to withdraw. But when he found there was no back-down in us, he backed down himself and became quite tractable. He's a fine rider and is doing splendidly with his practising. I shouldn't wonder if he carries off the first honor. By the by, Bertie, how are you coming out in practising?"

"I took the ring fourteen times in sixteen rides this morning," was the reply.

"Well, that is better than I did. I am afraid you will beat me."

"No danger of that, Russell. There is slight chance for me or Theodore either when you are in the lists; for you always crown the queen."

"Whom are you going to ride for, Bertie?"

"Nora," was the response; and through the deepening twilight Russell could see the flush that overspread Herbert's half averted face.

"So are Theodore Walker and Tom Harrison going to ride for Nora. She will have three doughty knights in her service, and among you all cannot fail to be crowned."

"And whom do you intend to crown, if you take the first honor?" asked Herbert rather shyly.

"Nora, of course; I would not like to be out of the fashion. Besides, there is no doubt, I think, of her being the prettiest girl in the county."

There was silence for a few moments, then Russell said,

"Hear! Bertie; there is Aunt Sally calling from the kitchen door to Tom, and I know very well what that means. I must brush up a little before tea; for I am sure, to borrow a favorite figure of Mammy's, that my rebellious locks are 'just like a fodder-stack.'"

"Come to my room," said Herbert, "and prim as much as you wish. There is plenty of time, though; for Aunt Sally and Tom are never in a hurry."

They were joined at the dining-room door by Mr. Lindsay, who greeted Russell with a familiarity and cordiality which declared him a frequent and welcome guest. And as they entered the room, Mrs. Lindsay advanced from the head of the tea-table, where she was standing, and gave him a gracious and cordial greeting.

This lady had been a beauty and a belle, and was still much admired. Her tall, slender and symmetrical figure, pale brown hair, dark gray eyes, fair complexion, regular and delicate features, formed a very pleasing *tout ensemble*. An air of great dignity and refinement was somewhat

marred by a slight haughtiness of expression, which would have been decidedly disagreeable but for a certain graciousness of manner that showed an amiable desire to please. Exquisite taste in dress, together with uncommon grace and style, enhanced all her charms; and altogether she was considered in that provincial society a very handsome and elegant woman.

As may be supposed, the young "deer slayer" was ravenously hungry after the violent exercise of the afternoon; but he did not let his appetite prevent his taking full part in the animated conversation that went on around the tea-table.

Mr. Lindsay had seen the deer run past the barn, and he was greatly interested in Russell's account of the chase. Next they discussed the Tournament; and the fond aunt was more pleased and flattered by Russell's announcement that four lances had been vowed to Nora's service than was the niece herself. The approaching election formed the next topic of conversation. Then Nora asked:

"Did you see the comet last night, Russell?"

"No," he replied; "I did not go out of the house after tea. As soon as the lamps were lighted I commenced reading the book Herbert lent me, 'The Last of the Mohicans,' and I became so interested in it that I did not put it down until bed-time. How did you enjoy the spectacle?"

"We did not see it either, and knew nothing of its appearance until the servants told us this morning. They were shucking corn at the barn and saw it as soon as it appeared. It rose quite early, they say. Uncle William told Uncle Zach that he must let us know as soon as it rises to-night, so that we can go out and see it."

When they repaired to the parlor after tea, Russell inquired of Nora if she had learned the hunting song he had lately given her; and when she replied in the affirmative, he requested her to sing it. She readily complied, and while Russell opened the piano, Herbert brought the song from the music-stand and arranged it on the instrument.

Nora's voice, though not of unusual strength or compass, was soft, full and of exquisite sweetness. It had been cultivated to some extent, and she sang not only correctly, but with taste and expression. She did not attempt operatic music, but sang only sacred melodies, simple English songs and Scotch ballads, principally the fine songs of Burns and Moore.

Russell was passionately fond of music, and possessed both uncommon musical talents and a remarkably fine bass voice.

Herbert had neither voice nor musical talents; but he was not without "music in his soul," being strongly "moved with concord of sweet sounds," especially when these sounds issued from Nora's rosy lips. He would sit and listen to her singing for hours; his refined and expressive face beaming with a look of still, deep and ineffable delight.

To-night, while Russell placed himself by her side and turned the music for her, Herbert stood at one end of the piano, his eyes fixed upon the fair songstress and his very soul borne away upon the clear, sweet, rippling tones that floated so lightly above the swelling waves of Russell's deep, rich bass in that spirited air, "The Wild Ash Deer."

When this was finished, Nora turned to Herbert and asked:

"What shall I sing for you?"

"Moore's 'Farewell,' my favorite always," he replied, looking out the music from an open portfolio.

"Really, I wonder that you don't get tired of that song, Bertie, you ask for it so often," said Russell.

"On the contrary, I like it better every time I hear it."

"That's the way I feel about 'Annie Laurie,'" said Mr. Lindsay. "So, Nora, when you have sung Herbert's favorite, don't fail to sing mine."

"Very well, Uncle William, you shall have your song. Aunt Lucy, I do not wish to slight you, so tell me what you will have from my *repertoire*."

"I am almost ashamed to ask for 'Flow Gently Sweet Afton,' after what Russell has just said about Herbert's favorite," was Mrs. Lindsay's reply.

A little later, Nora's voice arose in the sweet old air so familiar to all who speak the English language or sing the English lyrics. While she sang :

"Her brow is like the snowdrift,  
"Her throat is like the swan,  
"Her face it is the fairest  
"That e'er the sun shone on—  
"That e'er the sun shone on ;  
"And dark blue is her e'e ;"

the eyes of the two young men were fixed upon her face in the most intense and rapt gaze—Russell's fiery black orbs blazing with passionate devotion, and Herbert's soft gray eyes beaming with a yearning tenderness.

The very soul of the former seemed melted into his soft, rich tones as he sang :

"And for bonnie Annie Laurie  
"I'd lay me down and dee ;"

and although Herbert's voice was mute, his expressive face echoed the sentiment with fervid eloquence.

Mrs. Lindsay, who from her seat by the centre-table could plainly see the countenances of both, was startled by their expression. For several weeks past, she had been suspecting a dawning rivalry between these two bosom friends ; and now she felt quite sure that such a rivalry existed. This discovery was a most unpleasant one ; for it would be painful for her to see discord among this charming trio, whose intercourse had hitherto been so harmonious and so productive of reciprocal happiness.

The last strains of the song were just dying away, when Tom put his head in at the door and said,

"Mars William, Jim say how Uncle Zach say the comic done riz."

"Then we will also arise and go and contemplate it," replied Mr. Lindsay laughingly, as he led the way to the upper terrace of the garden, which commanded a fine view of that quarter of the heavens adorned by the celestial visitant.

Mr. and Mrs. Lindsay compared this with other comets, and spoke rather disparagingly of the length of its tail. Then the whole party discussed comets in a general way, speculating upon the character of the matter composing them, whether they shine by their own or reflected light, the possibility of one of these erratic bodies colliding with the earth, the probable results of such collision, &c.

Herbert, who was a pretty good astronomer, edified them all in his modest way by giving them the latest theories about comets, and describing the appearance and motions of Halley's comet, Encke's comet, Donati's comet and the great comet of 1811, which last being due again

just three thousand years from that date, we of this generation may scarcely hope to see.

When they had quite exhausted the subject of comets, and entirely satisfied themselves with the view of this particular specimen, Mr. Lindsay said to his nephew,

"By the by, Herbert, that box of books we ordered from Richmond came this evening; and John brought them up from the boat and took them into the library just before supper. Let us go in and examine them."

To this Herbert readily assented; and he and his uncle at once returned to the house. Mrs. Lindsay was following them, when seeing that Russell and Nora lingered on the terrace, she asked,

"Are you not going in, Nora?"

"Oh! we have not yet seen enough of the comet," said Russell, "Herbert has made us so ashamed of our ignorance that we are determined to study the subject of comets; and so we will begin by a thorough observation and investigation of this one."

"Well, I do not see what further you can learn about it by simply looking at it with the naked eye," Mrs. Lindsay remarked. "Now if you had a telescope, you might—"

"That is just some of Russell's nonsense, Aunt Lucy," said Nora. "We have seen enough of the comet; but the moon is just rising over the Beechwood, and it looks so pretty that we wish to stay out and look at it a little longer."

After this, explanation the aunt walked away, and the lovers were left alone in the garden, amid the soft shadows of night, beneath the starry heavens as much alone as Adam and Eve had been in the garden of Eden, so complete was the isolation of their entire absorption in each other and their perfect oblivion of the whole world beside.

The moon, rising over the dark forest, lit up the summits of the hills with its pale radiance, burnished the river with silver, and spread a magic tracery of mellow light, and soft, weird shadows over the wide valley.

In the moonlight, the garden was beautiful. The quartz pebbles sparkled like diamonds along the white walks, and the dew-drops glistened like pearls in the flower cups. The subdued tints of the flowers, the soft shadows of trailing vines and bending boughs, the delicate perfumes floating on the crisp but balmy air, all breathed enchantment over the scene.

And arching over the lovely earth, with a beauty and majesty of its own beyond the power of language to describe, bent the pale blue firmament studded with twinkling stars, amid which the moon was walking in brightness and the comet trailing its banner of light.

Since first this pale moon looked down upon the bliss of Eden, it had never shone upon a happier pair than this; for in their bright buoyant youth having no experimental knowledge of care, trouble or sorrow, the world seemed to them as fresh and lovely, and life, as beautiful and full of promise as if six thousand years of sin and pain had never swept with scathing fury over the work that God had made so good. And what mattered it to them that the trail of the serpent was over their Eden, since they had never discovered it!

Oh! the innocent freshness, the glorious elasticity, the blissful ignorance of youth. Oh! the sweet fullness, the thrilling fervor, the perfect rapture of first love! This bliss, at least, was not lost in Eden. This

relic of Paradise is left to gladden the morning of life, and as a precious memory to console its dreary evening.

Having been playmates in childhood and intimate companions in early youth, Russell and Nora had always been attached to one another; and as their expanding natures approached maturity, almost by unconscious gradations this lifelong affection had developed into passionate love.

For many months past, the young man, fully aware of the nature of the regard he entertained for the fair girl, had been assiduously striving to inspire her with a like passion, and eagerly watching for tokens of his success. His tender assiduities and anxious scrutiny had only recently awakened her to the consciousness that her image entirely possessed his soul, and that her own heart had passed irrecoverably into his keeping.

In spite of her exquisite modesty and delicate maidenly reserve, Russell who all her life had been accustomed to read her tell-tale face, divined that he was beloved. And so, though no word of love had been spoken between them, there was a tacit understanding; for looks and tones, smiles and blushes, form a language far less equivocal than words.

Knowing that his circumstances would not justify an immediate marriage, feeling assured of Nora's favor, and meeting her almost daily, Russell had not yet seen fit to tell his love and secure from her a promise of marriage. But he had very recently discovered that Herbert too was in love with her; and this fact, in view of his own high appreciation of young Lindsay's merits and attractions, and the exalted respect and tender regard Nora had ever manifested for her adopted brother, aroused in him a strange jealousy.

To-night he had encountered Mrs. Lindsay's startled look of discovery and dismay as her eyes wandered from Herbert to himself, then rested on Nora; and instantly it had dawned upon him what were the wishes of the aunt and uncle with respect to their adopted children. He saw at once what an admirable arrangement for all parties, except himself, Nora's marriage with Herbert would be; and he greatly wondered that he had not before suspected the plans of Mr. and Mrs. Lindsay for the future of their nephew and niece.

Knowing how devotedly Nora loved her parents by adoption, and what unquestioning obedience she rendered to them, he felt that their influence would be very powerful with her; and having suddenly become alarmed, he was anxious to win from her a promise of marriage before Herbert could declare his love and the uncle and aunt urge the suit of their nephew. But although his intercourse with Nora had always been so frequent and familiar that they were wont to communicate to one another almost every thought and feeling, a strange hesitation now restrained him.

Everything was propitious for the breathing of such vows. About them was the solitude that makes the lover's heaven—a solitude, too, gilded by beauty and fragrance. All nature seemed attuned to love, and his heart was bursting with passionate devotion; yet his tongue was dumb, because his reeling brain could frame no language adequate to express the fervid worship, the exalted rapture that thrilled his soul.

As the lovers moved slowly along the glistening walks, breathing the perfume of the sleeping flowers, there was at first perfect silence around them. The whippoorwills had gone to a warmer clime, and the insects which had enlivened the summer nights, had already ended their brief existence.

But soon upon the still air arose the sound of singing from the corn-

pile, where, at intervals, the negroes broke forth into snatches of some weird, plantation melody. Then this ceased, and a single voice of a remarkable richness and power burst into song. Nora at once recognized in the songstress Milly, the dairy maid, who, having a remarkably fine ear and voice, had, in passing about the house and yard while her young mistress was practising, caught many of her songs, which she was in the habit of singing at convenient seasons for the entertainment of the other negroes. To-night, she was singing one of Moore's songs which Nora had just learned :

"If life for me hath joy or light  
'Tis all from thee,  
My thoughts by day, my dreams by night  
Are but of thee, of only thee.  
Whate'er of hope or peace I know,  
My zest in joy, my balm in woe,  
To those dear eyes of thine I owe ;  
'Tis all from thee."

"My heart, since first I saw those eyes,  
Has throbb'd for thee—  
Free from all other human ties  
It clings to thee, to only thee,  
Like plants that sleep till sunny May  
Calls forth their life, my spirit lay  
Till touched by love's awakening ray,  
It lived for thee, for only thee."

They stopped to listen, and stood in silence, with clasped hands and beating hearts, beneath the stars among the roses, drinking in the sweet and passionate strains that flooded the still, night air.

At its close, Russell, with a quick movement, but inexpressibly gentle and tender, drew her to him, and bending over her, said :

"Nora, darling, it is needless to tell you that you are the light of my life, that all I know of hope or joy I find in you, that you fill my thoughts by day and my dreams by night. You know this—you must have seen it long ago. Tell me, dearest, that my love is returned—make me perfectly happy by saying that you will be mine—will let me devote my life to you, love, cherish, protect you as long as we both shall live."

He felt her form tremble, and saw that her lips and her downcast eyelids quivered; but she did not at once reply.

Bending still lower, he whispered :

"Kiss me, darling, if you love me."

She raised to his her fair face burning with blushes, her radiant eyes beaming with love and happiness, and

"Their spirits rushed together at the meeting of the lips."

As he held her to his heart, he felt that he had conquered fate and might defy the caprices and cruelties of fortune—that for this hour it were well worth while to be born, to live and to die, since existence could not possibly embrace any suffering sufficient to counterbalance such ecstasy of bliss.

Their rapture was disturbed by the sound of light footsteps on the gravel, and turning to meet the intruder, they saw Mrs. Lindsay's figure emerge from amid the shadows of the shrubbery.

"My dear," she said to Nora, "you are very imprudent to stay out so long in the night air. At this season, one takes cold so easily; and it is not too late for chills. You must come in immediately."

Thus urged, there was nothing for the lovers to do but follow her into the parlor.

Mr. Lindsay being fond of reading, and Herbert a perfect book-worm, the arrival of a box of books was usually to them an occasion of keen pleasure and absorbing interest. More than half of the uncle's enjoyment consisted in witnessing the nephew's delight as he drew forth volume after volume, glancing over its table of contents, skimming at random over its pages, reading aloud a striking passage here and there, and commenting on the style, &c.

To-night, for the first time, this interest and pleasure seemed lacking on Herbert's part. True, he followed his uncle to the library promptly enough, opened the box, drew out the books, and spread them upon the library table for Mr. Lindsay's inspection. But he scarcely glanced at the titles as he did so, and stood by silent and abstracted while his uncle was examining them and criticising the bindings and illustrations.

Among them, too, were some that he had particularly desired to see—a complete edition of Wordsworth's poems, the latest novels of Dickens and Bulwer, some bound volumes of the Edinburgh Review, containing contributions from Lord Brougham, and some of Macauley's best essays. When Mr. Lindsay directed his attention to these, he only glanced carelessly over a few of them, made some cursory remarks, and then walked away to the window and looked out.

Seeing this, his uncle naturally concluded that he was observing the comet, and made some inquiry as to whether it had changed any in appearance since they left the garden.

"I cannot say, as it is not visible from this point," was the reply.

He had been, in fact, intently watching such glimpses as he could get of the two figures slowly moving among the shrubbery along the garden walks. Over and over again he had seen these two alone together and felt no concern; but to-night a wild impulse urged him to fly to Nora and snatch her hand from the arm upon which it rested so confidently.

Presently, he saw Mrs. Lindsay join them; and with a sense of infinite relief, he watched the party return to the house and heard them enter the parlor.

Then he went back to the table, hurriedly took up a book and eagerly examined it, commenting upon the subject, style, &c., in an animated manner that quite reassured his uncle, who had been wondering what in the world could be the matter with Herbert to-night.

However, this sudden interest in the new books did not last long. Very soon, excusing himself to his uncle on the plea that he had to see Russell about some arrangements for the approaching Tournament, he joined the party in the parlor.

When he entered the room, he found the lovers standing together by the piano, bending over a piece of music, their heads close together, and their cheeks glowing and their eyes sparkling with a new and perfect bliss altogether unmistakable.

Mrs. Lindsay, who was seated near the lamp occupied with some fancy work, looked up as Herbert entered, and noticed the anxious, pained expression of his countenance as his eye rested on Russell and Nora.

"Come near to the fire, Nora," she said, pointing to a seat beside her. "You must be chilly from staying out so long. Come sit by me and see if I am doing this new stitch right; I am very uncertain about it."

"I never could see the use of fire such weather as this," remarked Russell. "You and mother must be two very chilly people."

"Say rather two very prudent people," was the rejoinder. "In this malarious region it is very important to have a little fire night and morning through the fall months."

Nora dutifully obeyed her aunt; and the latter, being an able strategist, contrived, by making the conversation general, to prevent any more tête-à-têtes during the remainder of young Thornton's visit.

## CHAPTER II.

Almost as soon as Russell had left the room, Mr. Lindsay remarked: "What a strikingly handsome man young Thornton is. He has all the easy grace and high bearing of the Thornton's, with his mother's splendid beauty. And he will have a very handsome fortune some day, if Bratton's mismanagement does not ruin the property before it comes into his hands. His prospects would have been brilliant but for his mother's injudicious marriage. Strange, that women will marry so foolishly as they do."

"And pray, how do you men marry?" retorted Mrs. Lindsay. "Did Mrs. Thornton act more foolishly in marrying Mr. Bratton than her first husband did in marrying her? I do not see how it can be more injudicious to marry one's overseer than it is to espouse one's housekeeper."

"Was Mrs. Bratton ever the housekeeper at Brantley?" inquired Herbert.

"Certainly she was," replied his aunt. "When Mrs. Bratton, then Isabel Martin, was about fifteen, her father, who was at that time Mr. Thornton's overseer, died at Brantley, leaving a large family in very poor circumstances. He had been twice married, and Isabel was the only child by the first wife. Her step-mother not being willing to take charge of her, Mrs. Thornton, pitying her destitute condition, gave her a home at Brantley, and had her taught to spin, weave and sew. When, several years after this, the housekeeper died, Isabel took her place. She had filled this position eight or nine years, when Mrs. Thornton became an invalid, and, after a lingering illness, died. During all her suffering, Isabel nursed her very tenderly and faithfully; and when his wife had been dead less than a year, Mr. Thornton rewarded the housekeeper for her services by marrying her. After this proceeding of old Mr. Thornton, your Uncle William talks of *women* marrying foolishly."

"But, my dear, there were many excuses to be made for Mr. Thornton's second marriage. He was an old man, nearly helpless from gout, and very lonely, his only children, two daughters, having married and settled in distant states. He was accustomed to being waited on by Isabel Martin, who knew his tastes and habits, and contributed greatly to his comfort. Then, too, she was a young and very beautiful woman. Altogether, it was not so very strange his marrying her."

"Oh! yes, young and beautiful, that excuses everything with you gentlemen, Mr. Lindsay. It makes not the slightest difference with men what else a woman may be so long as she is young and beautiful. But for my part, I never could imagine how a refined and educated person, accustomed to the society of cultivated people, can be fascinated with mere youth and beauty totally unaccompanied by intelligence, education, and refinement. In all these things, Isabel Martin was notably deficient, while Mr. Thornton, besides being well-born, well-bred and highly edu-

cated, had been for thirty years the husband of one of the most elegant ladies in the state, and was, moreover, the father of two of the most refined and accomplished girls that ever grew up in this community. How, under these circumstances, he could contract such a second marriage, has ever been to me an inexplicable mystery."

"But," suggested Mr. Lindsay, "Mrs. Thornton is said to possess a very lovable disposition—amiable, affectionate, generous. You must admit that she is notably liberal and kind-hearted."

"Yes, and as notably ignorant and weak-minded, which explains her marrying that creature Bratton."

"Well, that act of hers, I will not attempt to justify. You remember that I presumed to criticise it when you took me up so sharply. Her marriage with Bratton has ever been as great a mystery to me as Mr. Thornton's second marriage was to you. Upon Mr. Thornton's death, her situation was an enviable one. By having married into an old family she had gained a most honorable name; and she was in full possession for life of a large and flourishing property. Then, too, she was the mother of a beautiful and promising boy, who, as the sole heir to one of the finest estates in the county, and the last male representative of one of the most aristocratic families in the state, was an object of interest to the whole community. And with all these advantages, to the amazement and disgust of the whole countryside, she turned around and married Bratton, a man utterly poor, illiterate and obscure, her overseer."

"That was strange indeed," remarked Herbert, who was listening with some interest to this discussion of matters he had heretofore only heard of in hints and obscure allusions. "Pray, how did it happen?"

"Oh! Bratton was young and handsome then," said Mrs. Lindsay, sneeringly. "It happened just as Mr. Thornton's marriage with her had happened, only in this case, I can imagine more congeniality, as they had both grown up in the same social station. In the case of both of these marriages, as has happened with many others, the chief influence was propinquity. During the last years of the first Mrs. Thornton's life, Bratton ran away from an English ship on account of the captain's cruelty, he said, and went to Brantley seeking employment. Mr. Thornton, who was a remarkably charitable person, gave him some light work about the place for several years, and then made him his overseer."

"And a fine manager he made," observed Mr. Lindsay, "only rather too strict with the negroes to suit the notions of his employer, who had always been a lenient master. Still, although he objected to Bratton's harshness, Mr. Thornton continued to employ him from year to year, till finally the overseer became almost indispensable to his bed-ridden employer. I suppose Mrs. Thornton found his services equally invaluable, which may have influenced her to marry him."

"Umph!" Mrs. Lindsay said, "I do not see how such a drunkard as Bratton could ever have been a good manager or indispensable to any one."

"But he was not a drunkard at that time," Mr. Lindsay replied. "It is true, he always loved liquor and drank habitually, but he seldom got drunk in those days. It was only after his marriage to Mrs. Thornton, when he found unlimited opportunities to indulge his appetite, that he began to drink to excess. He is a confirmed drunkard now, and it is said treats his wife very badly. I wonder how Russell can bear with him as he does; he must find it very hard."

"He does," said Herbert. "I have heard him say so, but not often."

Russell is very sensitive about his mother's second marriage and the consequences of it. Even with me, his most intimate friend, he rarely alludes to the subject. He has a good deal of fortitude, I think, great powers of endurance; and what ills he thinks cannot be cured he endures uncomplainingly. He scorns complaint and repining as weak and womanish."

"That is wise and well," said Mr. Thornton. "Then, too, he is young and buoyant. Trouble sets lightly on the young—they do not take things to heart like their elders. And what a blessing it is!"

It may readily be surmised that the conversation had not been very agreeable to Nora. Her cheeks were crimson, and she looked mortified and embarrassed, restless and impatient. At length she ventured to say:

"Well, whatever may have been the faults and follies of Russell's parents, all who know him must admit that he has not inherited them, and that he keenly and innocently suffers the consequences of their indiscretion."

"Yes, poor fellow," said Mrs. Lindsay; "his is a hard case. By his father's foolish will and his mother's wicked marriage, that brutal, drunken Bratton has entire possession of the property during Mrs. Bratton's life, which promises to be a long one; and Russell, the rightful heir, is treated like a dependent in the house which has been the home of his ancestors for generations—reduced to a shameful subjection where he should be master. It is said that Bratton was very overbearing, even cruel to his step-son during his boyhood, and is harsh and cross to him now. I think, considering the circumstances surrounding him, that Russell is a remarkably fine young man. He certainly bears with his step-father wonderfully; but I suppose this is due to his mother's influence. He seems very fond of her, and I hear that she tries very hard to keep things smooth between her husband and son."

"Yes," repeated Mr. Lindsay, "Russell is indeed a fine young man, a wonderfully fine man considering that he has been subjected to the persecution of a tyrannical step-father on the one hand and the blind indulgence of a weak, fond mother on the other. Such influences must have ruined any but a very superior nature. The only faults I recognize in Russell are a very passionate temper and a rash impulsiveness that may lead him into difficulties as his sphere of action widens. I am afraid, too, that he is somewhat deficient in energy and enterprise, else he would fit himself for some profession or business that would render him independent of Bratton."

"He does intend to go into business, Uncle William," said Herbert. "For the professions law and medicine, he has no fondness. Besides, after his second year at college, Mr. Bratton, being enraged at the quantity of money Russell spent—for you know how generous he is—refused to let him have the means to go again; so that even if he had desired to acquire a profession, he would not have been able to do so without going in debt. This he was too proud and independent to do; and, moreover, he was never very fond of books and study. His is a very active, restless temperament; and he has a perfect passion for farming and for rural sports. As he knows that Brantley will be his eventually, and that as his father's heir and his mother's only child he has a better right now to the income from the estate than any one else can possibly have, I think it is natural he should remain there. Besides, his oversight of the plantation is very necessary, for more than half the time Mr. Bratton is incapable of attending to business. His mother, too, is strongly opposed to his leav-

ing, and exerts all her influence to keep him with her. He told me recently, however, that he could not stand his step-father any longer, and that he intended to apply to his father's half-brother, Mr. Beverly, who has long been a merchant in Baltimore, to procure him some business in that city. I sincerely hope that he may succeed in life and be as happy as he merits to be, for I have the highest opinion of his character, and to me he is as dear as a brother."

If Herbert had done violence to any selfish considerations in speaking thus favorably of his rival, he was rewarded by Nora's grateful, approving smile as she said:

"You cannot esteem Russell more highly or love him more fondly than he loves and esteems you. His praises of you are sometimes so extravagant as to be almost ridiculous. I tell him that he considers you absolutely infallible; and I believe you could make him believe anything in the world, or influence him to do the most unheard of things if you should choose to try."

"Yes," said Mrs. Lindsay, "they remind me of Jonathan and David."

"Or Damon and Pythias," suggested her husband. "Do you think, Herbert, that your friendship could bear such a test as this?"

"I hope so," was the reply. "I only know that I should be willing to trust Russell to any extent."

Nora was bidding her uncle and aunt good night, and this last speech of Herbert's so pleased her that, as she passed him, she bent over and kissed him on the cheek, a salutation that had always been customary between them until within the last year, when somehow it had been tacitly discontinued, neither knew exactly why.

She passed out of the room too quickly to perceive his start and look of delight, and the vivid blush that mounted to his temples. But they did not escape Mrs. Lindsay's observation; and her eyes followed him anxiously while he lit his candle and went to his chamber, a wing room adjoining the library. As soon as he had closed the door, she said to her husband:

"I have made a discovery to-night that is causing me some uneasiness."

"Indeed! What is it?" he asked.

"Herbert is in love with Nora."

"Well," he said, somewhat sharply, "I do not see why that should trouble you. It is just what I have always expected, and the very thing I most desire."

"But Russell Thornton loves her too."

"I am not surprised to hear this either; for our Nora is very lovely, and these two have known her long and intimately enough to be aware of all her merits and charms."

"But they cannot both marry her."

"Heaven forbid! Who suggested such a thing? Not I, I am sure."

"Oh, you worrying man! Don't you see that if both wish to marry her and only one can, there must be trouble for somebody?"

"Very true, I dare say—for Thornton, I suppose."

"No, for Herbert, and it is this which troubles me."

"What! Do you think that Nora cares particularly for Russell?"

"I very much fear that she does. I never thought so until to-night, but I noticed this evening that Herbert is very jealous of Russell; and he must have some cause for this. I am quite sure he has seen something to

alarm him. As for me, I am amazed at my own blindness and stupidity not to have perceived long ago what matters are coming to. But the intercourse between these three has been so free and intimate, Russell having been her playmate from childhood and Herbert like a brother to her during the past four years that I never thought until lately of regarding them as lovers. I do not know how far matters have gone between Russell and Nora; but I am sure Herbert has not yet addressed her. He is evidently in a feverish state of uncertainty and suspense."

Mr. Lindsay looked grave and spoke seriously :

"It would be a sad blow to my hopes if Nora should not marry Herbert. I had set my heart upon it, and I think it would be the happiest possible arrangement for them, as well as for you and me. I never saw two people better suited to each other. There has ever been the most perfect congeniality between them—the same tastes, opinions, pursuits. They seem to delight in each other's society. You must be mistaken in your surmise. I cannot believe that Nora prefers young Thornton."

"I fervently hope that I may be mistaken," was the wife's rejoinder; "for leaving Herbert out of the question, I should be very unwilling for her to marry Russell. He is well enough in himself, but his family connections are too objectionable."

"Oh! as for that, you need not object to his family. His is a proud and honorable name; there is not a finer family in the state than the Thorntons."

"But his mother's family are such disreputable people. Her father was a waif, of no acknowledged parentage; but everybody said he had Indian blood in his veins. He certainly had that appearance, and he hailed originally from the vicinity of Indian Town, where the remnant of the Pamunkey tribe are so mixed up with negroes and low whites that it is difficult to recognize the race or pedigree of any of them. Her mother was the daughter of a low foreigner, Spanish or Italian, who kept a little dirty dram-shop on the suburbs of Richmond and traded with negroes. To think of a Wyndham having such connections! And Mrs. Bratton herself, silly, illiterate, unrefined—what a mother-in-law for our niece, the most intellectual, cultivated and thoroughly refined girl in the county. And that horrid Bratton—how could Nora endure one hour of his society? Oh! I do hope such a thing may never be. Russell is very well as a friend and neighbor; but when it comes to marrying, that is quite another thing."

"I feel assured, Lucy, that you are borrowing trouble. Your imagination, as usual, is misleading you. Nora *must* prefer my nephew to Thornton, for in every respect Herbert is immeasurably Russell's superior, except in the small matter of personal appearance."

"The *small matter of personal appearance!*" repeated Mrs. Lindsay. "You little know girls if you consider manly beauty a small matter in their estimation. Looks go a long way with them; they are, in fact, so silly that in choosing a lover, nine-tenths of them think of nothing else but his appearance. And Russell is a perfect model of manly beauty and grace. His presence is positively godlike: it reminds me sometimes of descriptions I have read of the Greek statues of Jove. He looked so gloriously beautiful and so radiant to-night, and our poor little Herbert, with his anxious face and wistful eyes, looked so small and plain beside him that I could have chased him from the house. I could scarcely be civil. Oh! Nora has eyes like any other woman. I never saw such a worshipper of beauty as she; I fear there is no hope for Herbert."

"But Nora is not silly," argued Mr. Lindsay. "She is universally pronounced very intelligent. Then, too, she has decided literary taste. She admires and reveres intellect, learning, cultivation; and in Herbert she sees all these. He has a far better mind than Russell, and it is much more highly cultivated. As for his moral qualities, I never knew so pure and noble a character. His personal appearance is pleasing, his manners agreeable, his disposition lovely. What more could any woman desire? Nora cannot be insensible to his attractions and to the advantages of a marriage with him. I cannot believe that she would refuse him."

"Perhaps my fears are groundless," said Mrs. Lindsay, too sleepy to discuss the subject further. "At any rate, I will try and believe so as long as I can. Whatever the facts may be, I can do nothing at this late day. I am amazed now that we should ever have admitted Russell on such intimate terms to our family circle; any one with a grain of sense ought to have known better."

"I do not see how it could have been helped," Mr. Lindsay remarked. "Our family and the Thorntons have been neighbors and intimate friends for years; and Russell's father had given me so many evidences of his friendship, had treated me with such signal kindness, that I do not see how I could help befriending his son, especially when he so much needed my friendship. Then, when I brought him over first and encouraged his coming to play with Nora, because they were both so lonesome, who in the world would ever have thought of two such midgets taking it into their heads to marry each other one day. It never crossed my mind. Well, no matter what may happen, I can never regret that he found here the pleasant society, the refining influences and the harmony and happiness that were denied him at home."

Nora, full of happy thoughts and bright hopes, had been wrapped in peaceful slumber and dreaming pleasant dreams many hours, before "nature's sweet restorer" wrapped Herbert's troubled mind in repose. Long he sat before the embers on the hearth wrapped in painful reverie.

Since he had met Nora four years before, she had been to him the dearest object in existence; but being associated together in relations as close and intimate as those between brother and sister, he had never suspected nor recognized the nature of his love for her until recently. Accustomed to regarding her as a mere girl and himself as but a boy, it was not until he had graduated and she had left school that he realized how their relations were changing. But what most enlightened him as to the nature of his regard for Nora was the jealousy he felt in seeing Russell's devotion to her, and the favor with which his attentions were received. For several weeks past, his uneasiness on this subject had been increasing, till to-night it had culminated. He felt that such painful uncertainty was becoming unendurable, that he must speak to Nora and learn her sentiments toward himself, whatever they might be.

Then he thought if he should discover that her heart was indeed Russell's, the pain and disappointment would be harder to bear than his present state of uncertainty, illumined as it was by some faint rays of hope. Besides, though she might love Russell more passionately, he knew that for himself she entertained a fond and true regard, and her frank and cordial manifestation of this sisterly affection were very precious to him, too precious to be rashly sacrificed. Should he bring embarrassment between them by exchanging his position of a favored brother for the delicate one of a rejected lover, he felt that the old free, cordial and affectionate relations could never be restored. There would always be a sort

of barrier between them. And how could he bear to see her whose loving smile and tender words had been as manna to his hungry heart, cool, distant, reserved! No, he could not risk a rejection. He would wait and watch awhile longer, and try to learn his fate without disclosing his love, which, if unfortunate, must ever remain a secret in his own breast.

Thus in his own mind, he vacillated between a determination to declare his love at once to Nora, and a resolution to await a while longer the progress of events, trusting to observation to discover to him unmistakably the state of her affections.

Not being able to come to any definite conclusion, he drifted into a sort of retrospective reverie, of which Nora was the principal subject. His thoughts reverted to the time he had first met her, when his wounded heart, aching for the loss of his idolized mother, had found a healing balm in Nora's loving sympathy. How well he recalled the shy, lonely feeling with which he had approached Ingleside, where all to him were strangers. How timidly he had looked out of the carriage window when his uncle had said to him,

"Here, Herbert, is Ingleside, the home of three generations of your ancestors and your own home as long as you choose to make it such. I hope you are as much pleased to come to us as we are to have you, and that you may be so happy with us you will never wish to leave."

It was early in June. The grand old trees were arrayed in their fresh, summer foliage, the lawn was a vivid green, and there was about the dark, rambling old house such an air of cozy comfort and open hospitality, that his heart warmed towards his new home.

A climbing rose in full blossom was trained over the front entrance; and as he mounted the steps under this flowery archway, there appeared the loveliest vision he had ever beheld—a slender young girl robed in white muslin, with blue ribbons, her glossy chestnut hair falling in curls to her waist, her deep blue eyes beaming with kindness and her rosy lips parted in a warm smile of welcome. And then the rare music of her voice, as she said when her uncle had introduced them:

"We are so glad to have you at Ingleside, so anxious that you should love us and be happy in your new home."

From that hour her image had been engraven upon his heart; and during the four years that had followed, she was rarely absent from his thoughts. While away at college he had received a letter from her every week, written in a simple, graceful style peculiarly her own, telling him of all that was going on on the plantation and in the neighborhood, and especially of her personal affairs, of her studies, the books she was reading, the music she was learning, &c.

And his holidays—what would they have been without her? The merry Christmas times—which with the Virginians, true descendants of the English cavaliers—is a perfect carnival of domestic and social merry-making; how charming she had made the quiet old home with her lively talk, her rippling laughter, her joyous carrollings! How, upon his return, his heart would throb with delight as she bounded down the steps through the frosty air to meet him and give him the kiss of welcome. How happy he had been to follow her bounding step from room to room, as she exhibited her tasteful decorations, mottoes, wreaths, crosses and stars of the varied and beautiful evergreens that abound in that section! And when this ceremony was over, with what ineffable bliss would he settle himself in his favorite chair before the blazing hickory fire, holding her hand in his and watching the beautiful play of her animated

countenance, as she called over the programme of the week's gaieties—the dinner and tea-parties, candy stews, &c.

And then the summer vacations!—the long, golden, glorious days when they were always together, walking or riding, driving or fishing, visiting the garden and orchards for fruit and flowers, reading in the cool, shady library, or talking on the breezy porches about everything in the heavens above or the earth beneath that they had ever heard of—could he ever know such happiness again? Must there come a time when she absorbed in new cares and duties and warmer loves, he, the favored companion of so many happy years, should become an object of comparative indifference to Nora? when their regard should have sunk to the level of ordinary friendship?

And of all the people in the world that he should be supplanted by Russell Thornton, the dearest friend he had on earth, the man to whom during the last four years, up to within a few weeks past, he had confided every hope and wish and plan as soon as it was formed. So fondly did his heart cling to this bosom friend that the mere thought of a barrier arising between them filled him with distress and dismay. He groaned in spirit at the thought that in losing his love he would also lose his friend—for he could not be resigned to Russell's supplanting him, and he felt that he never could bear to see him the husband of Nora.

Then his fond, regretful thoughts clustered around Russell, recalling the circumstances of their first meeting and a thousand tender memories of their subsequent intercourse.

On that memorable summer day when he had first met Nora, there had been standing beside her a tall, handsome youth, whose stalwart frame, lofty bearing, and magnificent black eyes had impressed him at first with an overwhelming sense of his own inferiority. But as soon as Mrs. Lindsay introduced them, the easy grace and sincere cordiality of Russell's manner completely won his heart, which had never wandered from its allegiance to this fascinating friend.

Himself a delicate, city-bred youth, but little used to the society of boys, shrinking shyly from contact with strangers, and depressed by the recent death of his mother, how enlivening, how reviving and stimulating to him had been the kind and genial companionship of this strong, brave, generous young athlete! With what admiration and generous emulation he had regarded the agility, strength and prowess of the daring horseman and expert sportsman! How delightful had been the days they had spent together, the one in teaching, the other in learning the arts of riding, rowing, fishing, hunting, breaking horses, training and doctoring dogs. There was not a spot upon the estates of Brantley and Ingleside that was not associated in his mind with some happy occasion of successful rural sports in which Russell had always been the leader and himself the prompt and devoted follower. And now all this must be changed. All innocently and unconsciously she who had been the strongest bond between them, sharing in many of their amusements, and the object of the chivalrous attentions, the tender cares of both on such occasions—she, who had been hitherto so responsive to the love of both, and so impartial in her favors to them, had become the occasion of jealousy and estrangement.

As these thoughts surged through his mind, Herbert became more and more unhappy. He rose from his chair, and with a light and rapid tread paced the floor of his chamber. The hall clock striking one aroused him from his sad reverie. Opening his Bible, as was his nightly habit,

he sought consolation in its pages. He tried to draw off his troubled thoughts from the trifling concerns of time and to fix them upon the momentous questions of eternity. He tried in a devout contemplation of the wonderful love of God to find consolation for his failure in winning the human love for which his heart was thirsting. Strengthened and calm, though not fully consoled, he arose from its perusal and sought his pillow as the clock was striking two.

And what were Russell's thoughts as, following the plantation road between Brantley and Ingleside, he cantered across the moonlit fields. Ordinarily he was not given to musing, the objective largely predominating over the subjective in his nature. Of a genial, social, active temperament, he was keenly alive to external influences and deeply interested in surrounding persons and things. Abstract questions troubled him but little, and ideal subjects claimed a very small share of his attention. Although he loved passionately, he was not sentimental. There had been no sudden revelation to him of the nature of his love for Nora; for since he was old enough to know the meaning of the word, he had called her his sweetheart and cherished the hope of marrying her. During the past year, when Herbert had been away at college studying day and night to carry off the first honors, and he had been "loafing at Brantley," as he called it, he had been deliberately and assiduously courting her by a thousand devoted attentions, by admiring looks and tender tones and gallant speeches. But to-night, contrary to his ordinary habit, all the powers of his nature were so absorbed in contemplating the happiness that swelled his heart that he was entirely oblivious of external things.

Again and again, in imagination, he lived over the blissful moment when he had held her to his heart, with her sweet lips pressed to his in the passionate kiss that had sealed their vows. And he felt that in that moment had been centred the happiness of a lifetime, that existence could yield him no higher bliss, and fate could visit upon him no suffering too severe to be solaced by the memory of that moonlit hour.

From the contemplation of this scene, his thoughts spread forward in delightful anticipation to the time when she would be his wife, the light of his home, as she had long been the joy of his heart. The mere thought of days and months and years spent in her charming presence, under the sound of her voice, in the light of her smile, thrilled him with a delicious intoxication.

Then from happy imaginings of future bliss, his mind wandered to delightful reminiscences of past joys. Then it was that finding how closely associated Nora was with all that was purest and brightest in his life, he realized what an influence for good she had exercised upon his mind and heart, his manners and morals.

Of a passionate and chivalrous nature, he was especially alive to female influence, and in his own home and family such influence had been sadly deficient. His two half sisters he had never seen. His father's second marriage had entirely estranged his female relations and the ladies of his own set; and the friends of his mother were so little to Russell's taste that he gave them but little of his company. His mother herself (how his loyal soul winced in admitting her inferiority even in his secret thoughts) had been able to do but little for the improvement of his mind and character. Almost all he had ever known of domestic culture and harmony and happiness, he had found at Ingleside, through his association with Nora. But mostly was he indebted to Nora herself, who

almost from her babyhood had been his fair and tender monitress, correcting the bad grammar he had learned from his mother, reproving any rude language he had caught from the little negroes with whom he was allowed to associate freely, and rebuking the violent temper he had inherited from his father's family, and which had been fostered and aggravated by his unhappy home influences. Directly or indirectly, almost all the happiness of his life had been due to her; and he shuddered to think what his uncongenial and unhappy home-life might have made of him without her refining and elevating influence. Then the thought occurred to him, what if he had failed to win her affections and had been doomed to see her borne off out of his life by some happier rival. From the mere contemplation of the fearful void such a conjecture brought before him, his soul recoiled in affright.

Then, for the first time in his selfish happiness, he thought of Herbert's loss and disappointment, and remembered that the treasure he clasped to his heart with such triumphant bliss, had been snatched from the loving, longing heart of his dearest friend.

"Poor Bertie," he sighed, "how he must suffer! From my soul I pity him. But I cannot be sorry that Nora is mine—nay, I would hold to her though every man, woman and child should perish, and the whole universe be dissolved."

Then he added, "I should have done something desperate in Bertie's place, but he is as strong as he is tender, and will bear it like a man. There is none of the tiger in his gentle nature that there is in mine. Besides, he is a Christian, if ever there was one, and will find consolation which I would not know. Still, all the same, I sincerely pity him; for saint or sinner must suffer keenly in the loss of Nora."

But Herbert was too indelibly associated with the happy past which haunted the lover's mind, to be dismissed with this soliloquy. In almost every scene he recalled, there appeared the slender, well turned figure; the grave, thoughtful face and gentle smile of the supplanted rival. To him as to Herbert, there recurred the bright June day of their first meeting and the happy recollection of the long and affectionate intercourse of the following four years. How warm and bright had been their friendship during these golden days of their dawning manhood! And to think that it should now be clouded! Alas! that the joy of one should be the sorrow of the other! And in spite of his happiness, he sighed. So true it is that in this world "there is no rose without a thorn."

He was now drawing near to Brantley. Disregarding the drawbars across the road, he made his horse leap the fence, and his "foot was upon his native heath." On his right hand was a vast wood, hundreds of acres of primeval forest; and on his left lay the broad and fertile river valley. Far away before him, he could trace the dark line of the avenue leading from the gate to the massive, square brick mansion, whose belvedere and cluster of tall chimneys rose above an extensive grove crowning the imposing eminence on which it stood. A goodly prospect it was to look upon at any time, and a goodly heritage to look forward to. But Russell took no pleasure in contemplating it. For years past, he had never drawn near his home after even the shortest absence without a sinking of the heart, a sort of sickening revulsion as he came in sight of the place. This feeling now came over him more strongly than ever before, perhaps from the ecstatic character of his recent musings. As he drew near, a perfect horror and dread of the miserable wretch who had made his home such a hell to him, caused his very flesh to creep and the reins

to tremble in his clenched hand. And like a lightning flash, there came to him across the lapse of years a vivid reproduction of the scene which had introduced this long and loathsome horror into his hitherto tranquil and joyous existence.

It was just a week before his twelfth birthday; and his mother had promised to give him upon that occasion a cake and ice cream, and to invite the Lindsays to take tea with them. He had been spending the day so happily at Ingleside, teaching Nora to ride the new pony her uncle had just bought for her. First, to accustom her to the gait of the animal, he had taken her behind him, and with her dainty hands clinging to his jacket had ridden several times around the lawn. Then he had lifted her into the saddle and led the pony up and down the avenue. And finally she had progressed so far as to ride the pony by herself, while he accompanied her on Mr. Lindsay's riding horse as far as the ice pond. They had had strawberries and cream for dinner; and after dinner, he had climbed the wax cherry tree and thrown down the rich, ripe clusters to Nora, who caught them in her apron.

Thrilling with all this happiness, he was gaily wending his homeward way, whistling merrily as he peeled a long, smooth hickory rod he designed for a fishing pole, when, as he passed the quarters, his old "mammy" ran out from her cabin, and began to groan and cry as if her heart would break, meanwhile ejaculating between her sobs,

"My poor blessed lamb! my darling baby, that ever I should 'alived to see this day! Oh! when your poor father, my dear old master, was laid in the grave, what a blessed thing if you could 'a been laid 'long side of him. O! my poor precious young master, what is to become of you and of us all?"

Stunned with amazement and alarm, it was sometime before he could ask,

"Why! what in the world is the matter mammy? Is anybody dead?"

A crowd of young negroes had gathered around, with staring eyes and wide open mouths, to watch the scene; and at this juncture, Sam, a pert boy a few years older than Russell, undertook to deliver the news with which he was bursting.

"Lor no, Mars Russel, 'taint no funel but a weddin' we done had at Brantley to-day. Mistis done marry Mr. Bratton."

Cut to the heart—feeling a wild instinct to resist and resent his mortal agony, and recognizing in Sam the immediate author of his misery, with blind fury he rushed upon the boy and cut him a sounding stroke with the rod he had been peeling.

"Lor, my darling," cried mammy, seizing his hand and holding it fast, "Don't beat that poor nigger. How could he help it!"

"How dares he tell me such a lie?" cried the infuriated boy.

"Ah! honey, 'taint no lie. I wish to God it was. 'Taint no lie, but the sorrowful truth. Before you had hardly got to Ingleside this morning, here come Mr. Harrison's overseer and his wife, and Col. Wilcox' overseer and his wife, and Mr. and Mrs. Jones from Christian's Mill, and Mrs. Matthews that takes in weavin' and her daughter Susan, and that poor white trash Jim Darby—here they all come a drivin' up in their gigs and tumbrel carts as big as life. And hardly had they all got in the house, when that old red-headed, slab-sided Hogan, that preaches to the poor folks at Pigsaw and can't talk grammar hisself—here he come a ridin' up on his old long, grey horse, just as poor as a snake, and went

in the drawin' room and married 'em—your mother and her overseer, David Bratton. And then such a dinner they had—fruit cake, that I thought I was making for your birthday, and pound cake and ice-cream and pies, and ham and lamb and shoat and chicken and duck. And all them low down poor white folks they set down round my old marster's mahogany table, and et it up out of old mistis' best silver and china and cut glass. Sure as ghosts can walk, Brantley will be swarming with evils this night."

The boy had been struggling all the while to release himself from the grasp of the indignant and voluble negress, and succeeding at this point of her distasteful narrative, he flew to the house, up the steps, across the porch, and down the hall and rushed, the incarnation of frantic fury, into the stately old drawing room.

So intense was his excitement that his eye took in every detail of the grotesque scene, and his memory retained it to his latest hour.

The first object his eyes rested on was his mother, sitting on a sofa with Bratton on one side of her and Jim Darby on the other. She was dressed in a stiff and gaudy plaid silk, and wore a broad, white sash, and a large bow of white ribbon at her throat, while the high, stiff knot of her jet black hair was surmounted by a compact cluster of huge white roses, much resembling diminutive cabbages.

For brilliant coloring and shining newness, Bratton's bridal costume was a sight to behold. He wore a bright blue coat trimmed with brass buttons, pantaloons of some broad, gay hued plaid, a flowered waistcoat like Joseph's coat, of many colors, and a voluminous necktie that might have been clipped from the end of a rainbow. His ruddy and not uncomely face shone with the extraordinary ablutions due to the occasion, and with a broad smile of satisfaction and self complacency. His brown locks, dripping with a pomatum redolent of musk and cinnamon, clung close to his bullet-shaped head. His low, heavy brow, full red lips and bull-shaped neck unmistakably proclaimed the sensualist, and his small pale blue eyes gleamed with cunning.

Darby, who had been "best man" on the interesting occasion, was like the bridegroom "gotten up regardless of expense," and in a similar costume. It would be impossible to describe his expression of intense self satisfaction and of admiration for Bratton, the abject servility of his manner toward the bride, and the smile of supreme felicity which spread his wide mouth from ear to ear.

Near by, sat the portly miller, scarcely recognizable in his well brushed Sunday suit, though the meal dust still clung to his hair and beard. Very erect he sat and very wide awake, as if determined to lose no feature of the scene, apparently wondering all the while what would happen next. And at a little distance, were the two overseers, arrayed for this, perhaps the grandest occasion of their lives, in brand new homespun breeches and what had been their wedding coats nearly twenty years ago, now alas! grown very short in the waist, very tight in the arm holes, and very shiny in the back. They looked very ill at ease amid their handsome surroundings, and sat gingerly on the edges of their chairs, as if afraid of hurting the rich velvet.

On the other side of the room, in a straight row against the wall, sat the five female guests, each appareled in the choicest garments of her limited wardrobe, and all together presenting at a little distance the appearance of a bed of tulips or dahlia's in full flower. Very stiff and erect they sat; and in each capacious lap, upon a heavy, smoothly fold-

ed white handkerchief, reposed a pair of coarse red hands in a position of such isolated and prominent individuality as to disclaim all connection with the rest of the bright hued figure.

The eyes of all this interesting company were fixed in reverential admiration upon brother Hogan, who stood upon the hearth rug with his feet very wide apart, his thumbs in the arm holes of his waist-coat, and his head thrown back, repeating the heads of a discourse he had preached the preceding Sabbath at Zion, and which he said had been greatly blessed in "the pulling down of the strongholds of Satan."

Upon this gay and festive scene, the furious boy burst like a small hurricane, and his eye taking in the whole situation at a glance, he rushed up to Bratton and cut him fiercely across the face with the same rod he had laid so heavily on Sam.

The startled bridegroom sprang to his feet, and instinctively doubled his huge fist to strike his Lilliputian assailant; but the frightened bride caught the boy in her arms crying,

"O my son, what did you strike Mr. Bratton for?"

"Because Sam says he has married you; and I mean to kill him, yes, kill him," said the boy, grinding his teeth and shaking his clenched fist at Bratton.

Red with rage and mortification, and perfectly non-plussed at the awkwardness of the situation, Bratton could only scowl malignantly upon his rebellious step-son.

The miller was looking deeply interested, the overseers fidgety, the ladies frightened, Brother Hogan greatly scandalized and Darby fiercely indignant, when another actor appeared upon the scene.

Mammy, who had followed her young master as rapidly as corpulency and her stiff joints would permit, now put her head in at the door and said,

"Mars Russell, honey, come here to mammy—that's a good boy."

"Yes Suky," said Mrs. Bratton greatly relieved by the opportune appearance of the nurse, who had much more influence over Russell than she had, "get him out, please, and try to get him into a good humor. I never saw him in such a state. The negroes, it seems, have been telling him some tale or other that has run him distracted. But he will soon get over it. He's got the quick temper of the Thorntons, but it don't last any time."

His fit of fury was already subsiding, and he suffered the nurse to lead him away to the nursery. But although his anger cooled somewhat, his distress was so great that it nearly broke the nurse's heart to see it. Young as he was, he showed such an appreciation of Bratton's character, and of the disgrace his mother had brought upon himself and upon his father's memory by marrying such a creature, that mammy was surprised.

Alarmed and distressed at his excited condition, she disguised her own indignation and sorrow, and tried her utmost to pacify and reconcile him to the irrevocable error of his mother. To divert him she told him her very choicest tales of the fox and the rabbit, and of all the ancestral ghosts which haunted the grave-yard and garret at Brantley. She even forsook her cabin and comfortable feather bed for the night and slept on a pallet at his bedside.

She brought her supper and his own into the nursery, so afraid was she of his again encountering Bratton; and she piled his plate with tempting relics of the wedding feast. But this she found to be a mistaken

kindness, for at the sight of it his anger revived, and he threw it all on the floor to the dogs, which had been admitted to amuse and console him. But he agreed to eat a little bread and milk, and soon after fell sound asleep, to the infinite relief of the anxious guardian, who, knowing Bratton's fierce temper and cruel disposition, trembled with apprehension for her darling.

The next day and several succeeding days she prevailed on Mrs. Bratton to let her take Russell to a Baptist camp-meeting that was going on in the community. There he met with some of his father's old friends, who, having heard with amazement and indignation of Mrs. Thornton's second marriage, pitied and petted her son to his heart's content. So the first stage of his misery had been tided over.

But from the hour when he struck the jubilant bridegroom in the face there had been war to the knife between them. The bold, high-spirited boy lost no opportunity of showing his contempt and hatred of his step-father; and Bratton, with the meanness of a narrow nature and a vile and cruel temper, heavily retaliated. In trying to screen her son without exasperating her husband, the foolish woman had a hard time.

But harsh as had been Bratton's treatment of his step-son, Russell had suffered more in seeing the cruelty of his quondam overseer to the negroes. These poor creatures, who were entirely at his mercy, adored their young master and naturally appealed to him for protection. This his kind, generous and chivalrous disposition strongly prompted him to extend to them, but finding that every petition and remonstrance from him only doubled their misery, he had to desist and submit in silence to outrages that nearly maddened him. It was a marvel that he bore his domestic trials as well as he did. But what with the fortitude he inherited from his Indian ancestry, the pathetic entreaties of his mother to bear with her husband, and the pleasant distraction of his frequent visits to Ingleside, he had managed so far to endure them with remarkable equanimity.

As he entered the avenue to-night and looked down the moonlit vista to the grand old trees and stately mansion crowning the hill before him, he forcibly realized what a fine old place it was; and a wish he had often felt before came into his heart—the wish that he was already master there. How delighted he would be to be able to bring Nora there at once as his mistress! How lovely she would make it, he thought, with her exquisite taste and delicate womanly skill in adornment. How her fair face would brighten and her sweet, glad voice enliven the fine old rooms.

His mother already loved his betrothed fondly, and was prepared to receive her like a daughter and treat her like a princess. And he thought that Nora was herself too good not to perceive and appreciate the amiability, kindness and generosity of his mother's character, and that she loved him well enough to condone the weaknesses and defects of his only parent. These two, he was sure, could live together in perfect harmony. But Bratton!—the idea of his wife's being brought in daily contact with such a creature was inexpressibly revolting. Not only would he never dream of proposing such a thing, but Mr. and Mrs. Lindsay would on no conditions permit it, and Nora herself would never think of agreeing to such an arrangement.

No, his ancestral home was closed to him upon his marriage; and he had no other to which to take his wife. He must go forth into the world and seek to make a home for her before he could claim her as his own. This he knew would be, for one entirely ignorant of every form of busi-

ness, a difficult undertaking. He feared their wedding would be long delayed, and he knew that he would find it very trying to be separated from one he loved so fondly, and whom for so many years he had been accustomed to meet almost daily.

But he was young and strong and full of hope; for Nora's sake, he felt that he could do and dare anything. He even thought it an honor to be allowed to work for her, and considered that such an incentive must sweeten the hardest toil. "Poor Herbert," he murmured, "how glad he would be to have the privilege of working for her—even like Jacob, to serve and wait seven long years."

It was his habit when returning late at night to ride by the quarters to arouse the hostler to take his horse. To-night as he drew near to the cabin of his favorite groom he saw a light shining through the cracks of the door and heard groans issuing from the interior.

Dismounting, he knocked at the door, and not immediately hearing any response, he lifted the latch and walked in. There was a pile of blazing pine knots upon the hearth, and Dick was sitting crouched over these with his elbows propped upon his knees and his face buried in his hands, uttering the groans Russell had heard outside. His back was bare, and bruised and bloody, showed many a gaping gash freshly laid open by the lash. His mother had been trying to sooth the pain by bathing it when the young master entered.

Like his mother, Russell was extremely kind-hearted, and the sight of suffering completely unnerved him. At the first view of this ghastly and revolting spectacle, he turned deadly pale. For some moments he could not speak. Then he asked in a husky, unsteady voice:

"Dick, poor fellow, what is the matter? Who has served you so?"

"Lor', Mars Russell," was the reply, "who could or would a done it but Mr. Bratton?"

"The infamous devil!" the young man hissed through his set teeth. "How long, I wonder, will he be permitted to turn this plantation into a hell?"

Again there was a silence of several minutes, Russell's white lips quivering and his strong frame trembling with suppressed rage. As soon as he could command his voice, he said;

"I have so often begged all of you not to exasperate that drunken, brutal wretch, but to obey every order of his, to humor his wildest whim, and never to answer him back. You know how furious that makes him. You know, too, that his cruelties pain me almost as much as they do you, and that I am as powerless to prevent or avenge them as you are. For my sake as well as your own, I wish you would exercise some prudence and heed my injunctions."

"'Twan't my fault this time, Mars Russell. I couldn't help it."

"How did it happen then?"

"Well, you know, sir, Mr. Bratton is drunker than common to-day—you saw that yourself before you went to Selwyn. And so this evenin' he was sittin' in your ma's room in the big easy chair with his head hangin' down on his bres' and his eyes shut; and Judy she went in thar and she thought he was sleep. And when mistis asked her whar was the eggs she had sent her to bring in, she told her that Blanche had got in the hen house and sucked 'em all. And from that Mr. Bratton jumped up all at once and took down the cowhide he always keeps on the chimney-piece, and staggered out in the yard, cussin' you and your dogs and everything on the plantation. He saw me cutting wood at the wood-pile, and he

cussed me and ordered me to find Blanche and bring her to him. I knowed how much store you set by the bitch, because Mr. Herbert Lindsay had give her to you when she was a puppy and Miss Nora had named her, and I made out I couldn't find her."

"But Mr. Bratton went pokin' round hisself till he found her in the laundry, where mammy was trying to hide her behind the lyegum, and he dragged her out and made me hold her for him to whip. And you never did see anybody beat a dog so; I thought every lick would a cut her open. And the way she did howl was too pitiful. At last I could stand it no longer and I let her go. I tried to make believe that she got away accidental, but Mr. Bratton knowed better; and then he turned in and beat me like you see."

If this had been Russell's first experience of the kind with Bratton, he would have been quite beside himself with righteous indignation; but he had been outraged so often by similar occurrences that he had learned to control himself, outwardly at least. The negroes saw by the convulsive workings of his features and his clenched hands how strongly he was excited; but his voice was steady when he did at last speak in reply to Dick's narrative.

"It was very kind of you, Dick, to try to save my dog, and I am greatly obliged to you. But another time think of yourself first and let the dog go. I would rather have the whole pack killed than to see you butchered this way."

Then searching in his pockets he took out all the money he could find, amounting to several dollars in coin, and put it into the negro's hand, saying to him:

"Here is some money to buy you a plaster. And cheer up, poor fellow. The longest road has an ending. Whiskey must kill Bratton some day; and when I am master at Brantley I will make up to you for all you have suffered at his hands."

Upon leaving Dick's cabin he went to half a dozen others before he could find a man to take his horse, as they were all either at their wives' houses in the neighborhood, or visiting somewhere within a radius of ten miles. By the time he entered the house the wrath excited by Dick's story and his shocking condition, had cooled a little, though he was still much excited.

At the first sound of his footsteps on the porch his mother, who had been anxiously watching for him, hastened to open the door before he had time to knock. By the rather dim light of the hall lamp he saw that she looked anxious and worried; and in an agitated whisper she begged him to pull off his boots in the porch and creep as noiselessly as possible to his room, lest he might arouse her husband.

"He's been drinking a good deal this evening," ehs added, "and he is very angry with you for not coming straight back from Selwyn with Mr. Weston's answer about the yoke of young steers he has to sell. He's been looking out for your coming to pick a quarrel; but an hour ago he fell asleep in the dining-room with his head on the table, and if it don't fall off, I am in hopes he'll sleep till morning. If you make the least noise it will wake him; and then there'll be the mischief to pay. Ain't you going to take off your boots, my son?" seeing Russell trying to pass her in the doorway without heeding her request.

"No; I am not," he replied. "I am no longer a child to be creeping and skulking into my father's house for fear of that low-lived usurper. It is time that you and Bratton both should know I am now a man, coming and going when and where I please."

He spoke in rather a loud tone, and the sound of his voice immediately awoke the drunken man. As Russell was passing the dining-room door it was thrown wide open, and Bratton staggered into the hall, steadying himself by a table that stood on one side of the door.

His burly frame was bloated out of all proportion. His broad face, with the heavy chin, full lips, and puffy, hanging jaws, was purple, except the spongy, pimpled nose, which was a glowing crimson. His coarse, grizzly hair, long and uncombed, fell in a tangled, disordered mass nearly to his shoulders, and his watery, bloodshot eyes glared with a baleful light. A more disgusting and loathsome sight it would be difficult to imagine. In his harsh, rasping voice, thick with inebriation, he said:

"A pretty time o' night for you to be coming home, young man."

"Please to remember, sir," said Russell, in high, measured tones that betrayed an intense concentration of wrath and contempt, "that with my movements you have nothing to do whatever."

"I'd like to know why not, my gay young blade. I'll let you know that I'm master in this house, and as long as you hang round here livin' offen o' my wife's property, you've got to show some respect to her husband."

"Respect the devil!" was the angry retort. "A respectable subject you are, to be sure! You impudent scoundrel, to twit me with living off your wife's property, when *you* are all the time squandering *my* money and ruining my estate. I will have you to understand that I shall stay here as long as I choose, and go and come when I please."

"Mighty high talk, to be sure; but I'll see about that, Mr. Impudence. Maybe you think I don't know why you can't come home and bring a message till midnight. You've been over at Lindsay's, I'll swar', dangling round that gal o' his. But my fine and mighty young chap, them grapes hangs too high for you. Grand aristocrat that you think yourself, your blood ain't blue enough for the Lindsays and Wyndhams. If one of your grandfathers was Beverly Thornton, the Congressman, remember that t'other one was Dave Martin, the overseer, a bastard, part Indian, and some says part *nigger*."

It is the last feather that breaks the camel's back. The young man's self-control gave way under this taunt; and, with the bound of a tiger, he sprang upon Bratton and felled him to the floor.

Mrs. Bratton rushed between them and seized her husband's hand just as he was drawing the loaded pistol that he always carried in his pocket. Her grasp turned it aside from her son's head, at which it was aimed, and the ball whizzed very near her own temple as it buried itself in the oak facing of the door.

Enraged at her interference, the brute shook her off with such violence that she fell to the floor, striking her head against the sharp edge of the table.

At the sight of her blood gushing from the wound, Russell became perfectly infuriated, and falling anew upon the drunken wretch, gave him a severe beating; although his mother, white and trembling, knelt with clasped hands before him, begging him to desist.

When the young man's passion and his strength were quite expended, and Bratton, bruised and bleeding, lay an inert, helpless mass, only at intervals groaning heavily, he kicked the loathsome creature into the dining room, and locking the door, put the key into his pocket.

"O, my dear son," pleaded his mother, "don't leave him so. You have nearly killed him, and if there is nothing done for him he will certainly die".

And what if I have killed him? Didn't he try to kill me and very nearly kill you? But there is not the least danger of his dying. 'One that is born to be hanged' will never be drowned, and I fully expect one day to see your honorable husband stretch a rope. If he keeps on whipping the negroes as he does, he'll certainly kill some of them. He has half killed Dick Henderson to-day, and for nothing in the world. Go to bed and to sleep without feeling any uneasiness about the precious creature. His present state of stupefaction is due more to whiskey than anything else; and you have had ample opportunity to know how much of that he can stand."

So saying, he took the candle he found burning on the hall table and walked away to his room. But he did not do as he had advised his mother to do—go to bed and to sleep. On the contrary, he bathed his face and head freely in cold water to compose his excited nerves, and then sat down to write. The letter was addressed to his half uncle in Baltimore, requesting that gentleman to find him a situation there immediately.

"I give you *carte blanche* in the matter," he wrote; "just procure anything you can for me that will keep soul and body together and that is not absolutely beneath the dignity of a gentleman's son. After awhile, when I have had more experience and an opportunity to look about me, I hope to do better."

When he had sealed this letter, he drew out from the closet the large sole leather trunk he had carried with him to college, and proceeded to pack it with his clothes, hunting gear, and other small possessions. Then he fell upon the bed and slept heavily for a few hours.

At daybreak, he was aroused by his mother knocking at the door. She came trembling into his room, with a black patch upon her temple, and her face white and drawn, looking twenty years older than he had ever seen her; and sitting down on the bed beside him, she tearfully begged him to leave Brantley at once, saying she knew that he and her husband could never live together again after what had happened the preceding night.

She also told him that she was having his breakfast prepared, and had ordered his horse to be fed and brought to the door and a cart to be gotten ready to carry away his baggage. All the money she could find in the house, she placed in his hand, and entreated him to go at once to Ingleside, or some other place in the neighborhood before Mr. Bratton should awake.

He informed her of his preparations to leave and his determination to seek business in Baltimore. This morning, he said, he would go to his cousin's, Mr. James Taylor, who lived less than two miles down the river, and there he would remain until his departure for Baltimore.

Even under the happiest and most auspicious circumstances, the going forth from one's childhood's home into the wide, wide world, is one of the saddest things in life. But what a going forth was this! The sun was just rising over the hills and lighting up the valley, when Russell rode away from Brantley. Just so, at this bracing hour, so often had he ridden off to the hunt with his horse prancing over the dewy turf that bordered the avenue, and his dogs bounding beside him. Then his face had been radiant and his heart buoyant with joyous anticipation. But now his countenance was grave and his heart heavy, for he was going on a longer and a harder hunt—the chase for fortune.

As he was entering the forest, he turned in his saddle and cast a

long lingering look at the fine old place. Miserable as Bratton had often made it for him, it was his home, the only home he had ever known or was likely to know for many a long day; and his eyes filled with tears, and there was a choking sensation in his throat as he slowly waved his hat in a parting salute, then put spurs to his horse and galloped rapidly away.

## CHAPTER III.

The next morning dawned bright and lovely, and as Herbert, on awakening, glanced through the parted curtains of a window near his bed upon the green lawn, where the sunshine fell in golden bars through the dense foliage, a feeling of tranquil joyousness was momentarily awakened by the beauty without. But in a moment a wave of depression swept over him; and, from this vague unrest the trouble of the preceding night soon loomed up dark and distinct.

All the time he was making his careful toilet the debate which had last night so agitated his mind, whether or not he should tell his love to Nora, was going on silently within his troubled soul. At last, just as he was leaving his room at the summons of the breakfast bell, he resolved that he would end the intolerable suspense consuming him by speaking to Nora that very day, and learning whether there was any hope for him. To secure a private interview without attracting the attention of Mrs. Lindsay, who he saw was watching them closely, he determined to ask his cousin to ride out with him.

The fine weather and Nora's previously expressed desire to visit a handsome new residence just being completed in the neighborhood, afforded a pretext for his request. Nora readily assented, and upon leaving the breakfast table they found their horses already at the door. So as soon as Nora had donned her habit they set off.

Herbert thought as she sprang into the saddle that he had never seen her so radiant with health, beauty and buoyant spirits. Scarcely was she seated when she proposed to him a race to the gate down the straight, smooth avenue of nearly a quarter of a mile. As they dashed along through the mellow sunshine and crisp air of a matchless October morning, while she was all alive to the delights of the scene, he was considering what a fine opportunity he would have for the pleading of his cause when they should be jogging leisurely along, breathing their horses after this little burst.

But alas! "the best laid schemes o' mice an' men gang aft agley." Just outside of the gate, and preparing to enter, they encountered an equestrian party of three, a tall, handsome blonde young man riding a superb sorrel, and two pretty girls, one dark, the other fair, who were equally as well mounted.

As soon as they had exchanged the usual greetings, the blonde young man, Theodore Walker, said:

"We were just going by to invite you to join our cavalcade. Sister Alice and Miss Nelson are bent on making a pilgrimage to Col. Thaxton's new mansion to render their tribute of admiration, as it is the first house of any pretensions that has been erected in this neighborhood for twenty-five or thirty years."

"We are bound for the same point," Herbert replied: "They say

it is very handsome and of somewhat novel design; and I hear that the Colonel is much flattered by the interest manifested by the community in his new home; so, as the weather is so delightful for riding, I proposed to Nora that we should go there this morning. But when we started out we had no idea of the good company awaiting us."

"Oh! the more the merrier, you know," said Theodore, as, while Herbert was fastening the gate, he rode up to Nora's side and entered into conversation with her.

There was nothing for Herbert to do but to devote himself to the other two girls; so, three abreast, they cantered along in the rear of the cavalcade, Theodore and Nora leading the way.

Herbert saw from Nora's countenance that this arrangement was scarcely more agreeable to her than to him, and not knowing why, he interpreted it favorably to himself. So, when at the end of a mile Theodore had to stop and dismount to tighten his saddle girth, and Nora privately signalled her cousin to take his place beside her, Herbert, remembering how cavalierly Theodore had just treated him, obeyed the summons with joyous alacrity.

And despite young Walker's lowering brow, and his most persistent and cunning manoeuvres, Herbert kept beside his cousin till they reached their destination. But the others following closely behind, the conversation was necessarily general.

The new house was large, and there were bay windows and balconies and all sorts of cozy places admirably suited to a private *tête à tête*; but neither Herbert nor Theodore succeeded in securing one with Nora, for the reason that both of them were so bent upon it that each constantly thwarted the other.

"Confound the fellow," thought Theodore; "what has got into him! Anybody would think he was a sort of duenna set to watch her."

But Herbert was so used to see the selfish way in which Theodore always, if possible, monopolized the society of the prettiest and most agreeable girl in every company, that he thought nothing of Walker's conduct to-day.

Seeing that he would not be able to carry out his purpose until they returned to Ingleside, he chafed under the leisurely survey of the buildings and grounds in which the gay party indulged, and entered with only half a heart into their pranks and jests.

At last they were remounted and returning by a shorter route than that by which they had come. But to Herbert's annoyance, as they descended a long hill, and came upon a primitive little mill nestled in a shady hollow by the roadside, it was proposed by Alice Walker, and carried by the rest of the party, that they should be weighed.

When they were dismounting, Nora expressed her determination to come in a few days and make a sketch of the mill; and then Herbert first observed how pretty and picturesque was the rough, weather-stained building, with its sharp, moss-covered roof and the great grey wheel dripping with snowy foam pictured against the rich background of autumn foliage covering the encircling hills. A moment they stopped by the wasteway below the wheel, to watch the tiny silvery fishes dart in and out from the ferns and rushes bordering the mossy banks; and then they went on to greet the burly miller, who, looking like a snowman, stood in the worn doorway, which rocked with the creaking of the rude, heavy machinery.

"Come a fishing?" queried the miller, as he bobbed his big head and pulled his mealy forelock in greeting to the party.

"No, Mr. Jones," said Nora, "on a different mission. Since we have all left school and set up for men and women, we feel so very big that we are very anxious to know just how big we are; and so we have come to ask you to weigh us—that is, if your scales will bear so much vanity and conceit as may be put upon them this morning."

"Never mind the vanity, conceit and other mental or moral qualities," Theodore exclaimed, "we only want to know just how much flesh and blood it takes to hold and carry about the vanity and conceit of this party."

"Well its lucky," replied the miller jocosely, and with unexpected gallantry, "that you don't want me to weigh the beauty of it, as in that case I'd be bound to send to Richmond for the biggest pair of scales in town."

"Thank you, Mr. Jones," the girls replied in chorus, naturally appropriating the whole of the compliment. "How Mrs. Jones must enjoy the society of such a tasty and gallant man!" added Nora, as they climbed the rickety, narrow stairs, carpeted with the dust of ages and draped with the webs of generations of spiders, to the upper room, where the scales were most inconveniently kept.

Brushing off the scales with a meal-bag, the miller held it steady, while Theodore helped the girls in, and Herbert read off the weight of each from the rusted iron beam. Miss Walker, who was stout, was sure he had credited her with five pounds too much; and Miss Nelson, being slender, felt certain he had made a mistake in her weight. So these two had to be re-weighed, the young men changing places, and the miller searching all his pockets for his spectacles, that he too might examine the figures and give his testimony. Herbert, looking like "patience on a monument," wondered when they would be ready to start.

Then when they had descended the perilous stairway, and had stopped a moment for a last look at the ponderous slowly rotating stones, the miller's son, a sturdy urchin, who might have stood for the "bare-foot boy," entered the mill with a long string of shining silver perch he had caught in the pond. And hearing his account of the abundance of the fish, and how eagerly they were biting, the girls insisted upon spending an hour in fishing, knowing that the miller always had rods and lines to lend.

But fortunately for Herbert's wish, Theodore had a business engagement which would not allow him to tarry longer; and so, at last, they reached the gate of Ingleside.

But scarcely had they entered it, when, a little in advance of them, they espied a carriage accompanied by a horseman.

"The Harrisons," exclaimed Nora. "I knew they were coming to-day, but I did not expect them until the afternoon." So saying, she rode forward to overtake the guests.

"And now," thought Herbert, "I might as well give it up. With Tom Harrison to tell anecdotes and crack jokes, and Julia and Emily to laugh at him from morning till night, nobody will have a chance for a serious word or thought while they are in the house."

In this conclusion, Herbert was entirely correct. Tom was a modern Democritus, to whom life was one long jest. He saw a ludicrous side to everything and often ferreted out a joke where sober-minded Herbert found great difficulty in following him.

Dinner which was announced soon after the arrival of the guests, was a jovial affair.

Tom had lately gone to housekeeping by himself in a venerable mansion bequeathed to him by his grand-father; and his sisters had many jokes to tell about his experiments in housekeeping, the style in which he maintained his establishment, &c.

"I should like to inspect your establishment through a telescope, Tom," said Mrs. Lindsay; "hygienic considerations would prevent my taking a nearer view."

"Fie! cousin Lucy, what an imputation. You forget that I was brought up by my grandmother—literally nurtured mentally upon Poor Richard's Almanac, my venerable ancestress devoutly believing Solomon to have been the author of that valuable work. In my establishment, I assure you, I have a place for everything and a thing in every place."

"Yes," cried Julia, "you have several things in some places; but place and thing often sadly fail to accord. For instance, the dog kennel is under the front porch; and the buggy harness is kept in the front hall hung upon grandma's best mahogany chairs that she had polished every day for fifty years. And you just ought to see Tom's chamber—boots on the table, tongs on the mantel, pipes everywhere."

"How about the ghosts Tom?" asked Mr. Lindsay. "When I was a little shaver there were several generations of them in possession, and there has been another generation added since then."

"Oh! the rats have driven out the ghosts. Nothing mortal nor spiritual can stand them. I have been trying to get a chance to explain that I have to keep my saddle and buggy harness in the hall adjoining my chamber to protect them from the 'gray old plodders, gay young frisk-ers, &c.," who throng at Oak Hill in even greater numbers than they did at 'Hamelin Town on the River Weser.'"

"And do you keep your hounds under your front porch to protect them from the rats, too?" asked Nora.

"Now, sweetheart, you be still; three against one is not fair play."

"What about your crops, Tom, and how did your sheep turn out?" asked Herbert.

"All failed—half the sheep died in the spring—sold the rest for little or nothing. The fact is, I was born on the wrong time of the moon. As old Nattalie Corrie of Edinburgh said of himself, 'If I were to turn baker, bread would go out of fashion.'"

"You ought to get married, Tom, and settle down," suggested Mr. Lindsay, in default of something better to say proffering the stereotyped advice which succeeding generations of Benedicks have offered festive bachelors from time immemorial.

"Yes," said Nora, "that is what the little bachelor in the nursery rhyme did—'the little bachelor who lived by himself, and all the bread and cheese he got he put upon a shelf.'"

"That's a fact," and Tom continued the rhyme,

'The rats and the mice they kept such a strife,  
He had to go to London to get him a wife.'

Cute little chap! He knew a woman would make such a clatter about a house as was bound to drive off the rats.' I've been thinking about that alternative myself. The fact is, I am in that business now. You know, Cousin Lucy, that Cousin Nora and I have been lovers a long time. She's put me off from time to time, but I think from the prompt way she seconded her uncle's advice just now that she's about to give in. So Parson Lindsay," turning to Herbert, "I think I may safely engage

your services at no distant day—I forget though—you look so very clerical, and so uncommonly grave to-day that I quite forgot you have never taken orders.”

“Never mind that,” Herbert retorted, “I am sure I shall have finished my theological course some time before you lead Nora to the altar.”

“So, young man, you insinuate doubts of my success; and you seem to speak as one having authority. Upon my word, I believe the fellow has been making advances in that quarter himself, and thinks he has got ahead of me. I will have to look into the matter.”

At this random shot, Herbert blushed crimson, and was utterly unable to reply. The Harrison girls, who only attributed his confusion to his well known shyness, laughed gaily at his discomfiture. Nora thought his embarrassment very absurd, considering how little attention anybody paid to Tom Harrison’s wild talk. She observed, too, with surprise, that her aunt looked annoyed, as she arose from the table and led the way to the parlor.

Nora was so used to Tom’s jocose and public love-making that she thought nothing whatever of it; and she had not as yet begun to suspect the nature of Herbert’s feelings towards her. True it was that several times within the past week, his looks and tones had startled and perplexed her; but other things, principally her own absorbing happiness, had immediately effaced these confused impressions. After the charge that Tom had jestingly brought against Herbert, the latter scarcely dared to look at Nora in his presence; and as Tom seemed ubiquitous, the declaration he had resolved upon was indefinitely postponed.

After practising singly at their respective homes for weeks in preparation for the Tournament, the knights had arranged for a general practising at The Grove the day preceding the entertainment, in order to familiarize themselves and their horses with the course over which the final trial was to be made. So the day after the arrival of the Harrisons at Ingle-side, Tom and Herbert, early in the afternoon, set off for The Grove.

Most of the knights had arrived before them; and these greeted Tom Harrison’s advent with cheers, and flocked around him in a manner that showed they expected agreeable entertainment in his society. And they were not disappointed; for with grotesque mimicry of every peculiarity in the riding, and with jests and quibs he kept the circle around him in a roar throughout the greater part of the evening.

Russell Thornton responded so gaily to Tom’s sallies, and entered so heartily into the fun, that no one could have suspected what painful and mortifying scenes he had lately passed through. And Herbert, who although he very rarely originated a witticism, yet keenly appreciated wit and humor emanating from others, laughed so heartily that the seriousness Tom had alluded to quite disappeared from his countenance and manner.

Altogether, it was a jovial occasion; and at the close of the afternoon the company separated in the liveliest spirits, and full of joyous anticipations of the coming sport.

When they were returning home, Russell and Herbert rode a mile or more side by side, accompanied by Tom Harrison and Theodore Walker at a little distance in the rear. When they reached the road which led both to Ingle-side and Brantley, to Herbert’s surprise, Russell turned off into another highway.

“Are you not going to Brantley this evening?” asked young Lindsay.

"No, I have left Brantley for good and all."

"I hope nothing unusually disagreeable has occurred."

"I am sorry to say that something extremely disagreeable has occurred. I was compelled by Bratton's insolence to myself and his cruelty to my mother to give him a beating; so he and I have parted to meet no more, unless by accident."

"I am truly sorry to hear it, Russell. Since you have left Brantley, come and stay with me until your plans are matured."

"Thank you, but I am staying at present at Cousin James Taylor's. I have written to my uncle in Baltimore asking him to find me some business there; and as soon as he succeeds I shall leave for that city."

"Well, I dare say that is the best thing you can do, and I heartily wish you success; but I shall miss you very much. The neighborhood will appear very lonely to me without you."

"Why, Bertie, I thought you expected to be away yourself; I understood that you would enter the theological seminary this fall."

"That was my intention, but Uncle William has persuaded me to stay at Ingleside this winter, and read church history and continue my Hebrew with Dr. Dana. Uncle William imagines I have been studying very hard, and he says I have been so closely at school and college for so many years that he fears, if I go in for three years more without any intermission, my health might fail."

"Well, you won't kill yourself studying if you haven't anything to stir you up more lively than old Dana. But I am keeping you, and it is getting late. Good-bye, Bertie, and whatever other evils your lot may comprise, be thankful that you have not a step-father."

Shortly after Russell's departure, Theodore Walker turned in at his father's gate; and Tom and Herbert were left together.

"I tell you what," said Tom, "from what Theodore tells me, they have had a terrible row at Brantley, and Bratton has driven his step-son from home. No one could have guessed it from Russell's bearing to-day. I never saw him in finer spirits—did you? I shouldn't think he'd much relish being sent adrift, especially when the property is his own by right."

"Russell has great self-command, except when he is violently excited," replied Herbert; "and he is a good actor when he chooses. I never saw any one possess such control of the facial muscles; he can make his face perfectly impassive when he chooses. It is not easy to judge of his feelings from his countenance and manner."

"Yes, Theodore said something of the same kind, and he remarked that the peculiarity is due to Thornton's Indian blood. By the by, those two fellows never did get along, and Theodore never misses an opportunity to say something disparaging of Thornton. You ought to have heard him discussing the late family jar at Brantley. He says that Bratton is a perfect brute, that Russell has the temper of the devil, and that the two lead a cat and dog life. The last row, though, he says, was uncommonly severe; Russell gave the old fellow such a beating, that he has been laid up ever since; and somehow, the old lady got mixed up in the melee and nearly got her light put out—has been going around ever since with a black patch over her eye."

"And pray how did Theodore obtain such extensive and accurate information about the affair? The two families at Woodlawn and Brantley have no intercourse whatever."

"Oh! *niggers' news*, of course. You know the darkies can beat the

telegraph all hollow. I suppose by ten o'clock the next night there were twenty or thirty of the Brantley negroes gadding in every direction, and each telling the tale colored to suit his own fancy. Some of them have wives at Woodlawn, and so Theo thinks he got the news very straight."

"Well," remarked Herbert, with the nearest approach to a sneer he ever indulged in, "the gentlemen in this community are not in the habit of collecting and retailing the gossip of tale-bearing menials. Theodore degrades himself more than he does Russell by such conduct; and he had better not let Russell hear him at it, or he might receive a reminder that he had better attend to his own business and let his neighbor's alone."

"That's a fact, for Thornton won't stand much of that kind of nonsense, especially from Theodore. Don't you remember how they used to fight at school, and what a drubbing Russell gave Theodore the last year we were all at the academy? That was about some disparaging remarks of Theo about Russell's family."

"Yes," said Herbert; "and at college they nearly fought a duel about a similar offence. It seems to be a pet theme with Theodore, doubtless because it is Russell's tender point."

"I never did see two fellows find so much to quarrel about," remarked Tom.

"It is entirely Theodore's fault," said Herbert.

"I dare say it is mostly; but you must admit, Herbert, that Russell is deuced quick tempered."

"I know he is, but his anger is as soon over. There is nothing small or mean about Russell; but I am sorry that I cannot say as much for Theodore."

"No, nor can I; for Walker is mean, that's a fact—arrogant, overbearing, selfish, unscrupulous, vindictive. I don't believe I know a worse fellow. Nobody likes him, and I believe that's the main reason he hates Thornton so; he envies the popularity of our friend. Besides, I have strong suspicions that at this time he is fired by jealousy; for it is my profound conviction that the handsome Theodore, as well as you, Russell and myself, is head over ears in love with my pretty cousin Leonora."

Herbert felt devoutly thankful that the gathering twilight concealed the vivid blush which mounted to his brow at this charge. Quickly recovering from the embarrassment which for a moment kept him silent, he exclaimed incredulously,

"You in love?"

"Yes, to be sure, Why not? Haven't I eyes in my head, and a heart, like other men? And why shouldn't I have a wife as well as another? Though how I am to get one is a puzzling question. I have such a reputation for jesting and fooling that all my love-making passes for nonsense. I shall never make the dear creatures believe me to be serious; and even if I did, the very idea of Tom Harrison's being serious about anything, especially seriously in love, would be too funny. If I should shoot myself for the fair creatures, I dare say they would only laugh at me."

And Tom's face, as he said this, assumed an expression of such gravity, perplexity and vexation, not unmingled with melancholy, that Herbert, comically impressed as Tom had said the girls would be with the incongruity, burst into a peal of laughter.

"There! I said so," growled Tom; "you would all laugh over my grave."

"Not half so probable as that you would laugh over ours," was the retort.

Since in all out-door entertainments the weather is such an important factor, it was a fortunate circumstance that the day of the Tournament was superb; for although there were a few light masses of cumulus clouds piled along the eastern horizon, which the weather prophets declared portended rain in the near future, there were no suspicion of such a thing in the balmy air and in the glorious sunshine which shimmered over the broad fields and burnished the gorgeous autumn foliage to a gem-like brilliancy.

The Grove plantation lay along the north bank of James River, and was the property of Col. Wilcox, a devoted admirer of the fair sex, although, in spite of his having been beau general to several generations of rural belles, he had never succeeded in inducing one of them to share his fortune. The house was large, the grounds were extensive; and the bachelor proprietor had placed the whole premises at the disposal of the managers of the Tournament.

As this was expected to be the most elegant and brilliant fête that had ever enlivened the community, the preparations at the Grove were quite elaborate. Not only the supper room, the spacious hall and the two large parlors opening into it were adorned with flowers and evergreens, but even the dressing rooms upstairs were similarly ornamented, so that the whole house resembled a fairy bower. The porches, one of which ran the whole length of the rear of the house, had been decorated with festoons of evergreens and tubs and pots of growing flowers. The lawn and avenue were hung with Chinese lanterns, ready to be lighted at nightfall.

Sloping down from the edge of a fine forest which bordered the broad, level field in front of the house, was a pretty knoll, on the summit of which had been erected a large pavilion covered with white and red canvas; and in this pavilion seats arranged in tiers had been placed for the accommodation of the spectators. A little distance from this, on the opposite side of the course, was a much smaller pavilion to be occupied by the umpires, who were to time the riding and see that the conditions of the tourney were strictly fulfilled.

The course was a level roadway eighty yards long, five yards wide and covered with tan-bark. This was spanned by three tall arches, twenty yards apart, from each of which was suspended a ring one-and-a-half inches in diameter.

The knight who in three rides should nine times carry off a ring on the point of his lance, would be entitled to the honor of crowning the Queen of Love and Beauty. Or if none should succeed in accomplishing this feat, the one who might most nearly approach it, would secure that privilege. In taking these rings, the knights were required to run the course of eighty yards in six seconds.

The riding was to take place in the afternoon; and as the hour grew near the road to The Grove was thronged with vehicles and horseman. The pavilion was soon crowded with young people, most of the older ladies preferring to sit with the children and nurses in the double row of carriages along the course.

It was a gay and brilliant scene; and the gorgeous background of forest, the rich fall dresses of the ladies, and the bright and handsome costumes of the knights, dashing about or collected in groups near the pavilion, would have formed a fine subject for an artist whose forte was

color. It was, too, a highly animated scene; the rustle of constant arrivals, the greetings between friends and neighbors, kind inquiries, pleasant jests, lively sallies, all in the soft, refined tones of a people who for geniality and true courtesy never had a superior, made a subdued and cheerful buzz through the gently heaving mass gathered under the pavilion.

Near the centre of the pavilion, in close proximity to two rival beauties, who for a year or two before her own debut had been the reigning belles of the community, sat Leonora Wyndham, who, animated by the liveliness of the scene and the interest of the occasion, was looking unusually lovely. As may be supposed, the beautiful trio, each representing a totally different style, attracted much attention, and the comparison of their different charms gave rise to no little discussion among those sufficiently distant to indulge in that diversion.

The hour for the riding having arrived, the band from Richmond stationed in the front part of the pavilion, struck up a martial air; and the twenty knights, who had formed four abreast at the starting place, rode slowly forward and deployed in a line in front of the pavilion. Here, on a little stage, stood Gen. Hunter, the orator of the day, in readiness to deliver his charge to them.

Except Col. Wilcox, who with his beard dyed and his bald head covered by a jaunty hat, looked twenty years younger than his real age, they were all under twenty-five years of age. All except Tom Harrison and the colonel were fine looking, many of them strikingly handsome. Every one was handsomely dressed and splendidly mounted, and each sat his spirited steed with the ease and grace of the accomplished horseman. And oh! how many bright eyes grew brighter, and how many beating hearts beat faster, as the crowd of lovely girls looked over the brilliant cavalcade.

Conspicuous in this array, was the Black Knight, Russell Thornton, attired in a closely fitting suit of black velvet trimmed with gold braid and gilt buttons. A sash of crimson satin was passed over one shoulder and knotted at his waist on the opposite side; and he wore a black velvet cap with a long black plume. He rode his favorite horse Pluto, a powerful black hunter, whose coat to-day vied in glossiness with the short, raven curls of his master.

Herbert Lindsay, as Knight of Ingleside, wore a suit of dark green velvet, (bottle-green it was called in that unaesthetic age) with a white sash and silver trimmings; and a white plume was fastened with a silver Maltese cross in his green velvet cap. His mare Selene, which showed her Arab blood in the exquisite symmetry of her form and her light, airy movements, was so carefully groomed for the occasion that she gleamed like a snow-drift in the sunlight, and her flowing mane and tail rippled in a thousand silky waves.

Theodore Walker's blonde beauty was finely set off by a suit of dark blue velvet, with a satin sash and trimmings of a lighter shade of the same color. In his cap he wore no ornament but a large silver star; and he had entered the list as "The Knight of the Lone Star," in token of his sympathy with the Texan cause, which was then beginning to occupy public attention in that community.

These three Knights and Tom Harrison, all wore on their left breast a tiny blue cockade, Nora's favor, showing that they were enlisted in her service.

Gen. Hunter's address was a type of those usually delivered on such occasions, neither better nor worse than the average. But as most of the

female hearers had never heard anything but pulpit oratory, and the male portion, in addition to the sermons, had listened to little besides political harangues and legal arguments, they pronounced it very fine indeed.

He began, of course, by alluding to the origin of chivalry in the unsettled state of government and society which marked the feudalism of the Middle Ages, when the prevailing idea of equity had been that of Robin Hood:

"For why?—because the good old rule  
Sufficeth them, the better plan,  
That they may take who have the power,  
And they may keep who can."

Next, as usual also, he paid a glowing tribute to woman, which brought blushes and smiles to the faces of the fairer portion of his audience, and drew thunders of applause from their fathers, husbands and brothers, especially the gallant knights.

And in conclusion, when exhorting the dashing young cavaliers to imitate and emulate the character and deeds of that purest and brightest ornament of chivalry, "*le chevalier sans peur et sans reproche*," he reminded them of the honorable reputation their forefathers had earned for the typical Virginia gentleman, and urged them to sustain this reputation by their own lives and conduct, and transmit it untarnished to their sons, that our grand "*Old Dominion, the Mother of States and Statesmen*," whose glorious escutcheon is as yet without a blot, may through the coming years maintain her proud place in our country's history—but you just ought to have heard the cheering then! Some of the more excitable and enthusiastic ladies even ventured to launch a timid cheer upon the great wave of sound that swept over the field and echoed through the forest. The delighted negroes clapped their hands, too; the children laughed, the babies crowed; the dogs, which attend all sorts of assemblages in Virginia, began to bark; and altogether the hubbub was so great that some of the horses began to rear and plunge, and some faint little screams of terror were mingled with the noisy tribute to Virginia's glory.

When the address was concluded, the band struck up a popular air, the knights rode back to the end of the course, and the riding commenced.

The first course went off very well, except that three knights failed to take a single ring and were ruled out. One of these was Col. Wilcox, but this had happened to him so often before that he was prepared to stand it with equanimity. A ludicrous accident, however, made his present discomfiture unusually mortifying. On his last ride, a breeze springing up suddenly blew off his hat, and his unsuccessful stroke at the ring having set the wire upon which it hung to vibrating rapidly just as he passed under it, it struck him a sounding whack right in the middle of his bald pate. At this a suppressed titter ran around the pavilion, and a peal of laughter arose from the ranks of the ungrateful knights.

At the end of the third course there was found to be a tie for the first honor, Russell Thornton and Herbert Lindsay having each taken nine rings. This made it necessary for the two to ride again.

This last course between the two most successful knights was watched with absorbing interest; for if there is anything Virginians do especially admire it is fine horsemanship.

Russell carried off a ring every time, and as he took the last one he was lustily cheered. Then when Herbert, who had so far taken a ring each time, prepared for his last ride, there was deep silence, and a pain-

ful craning of necks and straining of eyes after his white plume as Selene flashed like a pale meteor along the course. Either from excitement or fatigue, he missed the ring; and this prize, too, was carried off by his triumphant rival.

When Russell had been announced by the herald the successful knight and entitled to the honor of crowning the Queen of Love and Beauty, he cantered up to the pavilion to make his obeisance to the ladies and lay his honors at the feet of the lady of his choice. He was received with beaming smiles, waving handkerchiefs and showers of bouquets, which fell all over him and Pluto. The knights crowded around him to offer their congratulations, and the ladies thronged about Nora to congratulate her upon obtaining the royal honors.

The only knights who failed in this courtesy were Theodore Walker and Tom Harrison. All who knew Theodore could readily account for his absence, but Tom's was not so easily explained. However, while conjecture was busy with the subject, the attention of all was attracted by the sound of a horn in the neighboring wood, and immediately after two of the strangest and most grotesque figures were seen emerging.

In advance was a tall, lean form encased in a clumsy imitation of ancient armour, a ponderous helmet covering the head and a visor concealing the face. This dismal-looking knight rode a long, gaunt, sorrel steed with rib and hip bones nearly bursting through the rusty hide which was deeply scarred by the rubbing of plow and cart gear. As this stiff anatomy moved slowly forward it was closely followed by a little, dumpy, oddly-dressed figure mounted on a small, frisky mule.

Erect and solemn looking, the dismal knight rode up to the judge's stand, followed by his faithful squire, vigorously blowing a long tin horn. Arrived there the noise of the horn ceased, and in a measured, sepulchral tone, the knight addressed the umpires :

"Most noble signors, so graciously presiding over this courtly festival, behold in me the valorous and renowned Knight de la Mancha, who begs the privilege of running a tilt in honor of the illustrious Donna Dulcinea del Toboso, the perfection of all beauty, the quintessence of discretion, the treasury of wit, and the pledge of modesty."

Having received the desired permission, the Knight de la Mancha placed his arms akimbo, grasped his lance awkwardly, and, digging his rusty spurs into the hollow flanks of Rozinante, dashed at the ring, striking wildly about as he neared it. After various frantic and unsuccessful efforts, interspersed with ejaculations after the manner of Don Quixote, he contrived to fall off his horse, when the armor burst apart, and, the helmet rolling one way and the visor another, left exposed to the spectators what nine-tenths of them expected to see, the ugly, laughing face of Tom Harrison.

This little farce improvised by Tom Harrison without the knowledge of even the managers, occasioned so much merriment that the disappointed knights and their worse disappointed sweethearts, with a solitary exception, seemed to forget their chagrin, and all dispersed in the jolliest mood to meet a few hours later at the ball.

The guests who lived near The Grove returned home to take refreshments and dress for the ball; but those who resided at a distance repaired to The Grove for that purpose. Among the latter were the Lindsays and their guests, the Harrisons.

In their dressing-room they found a little table set where a neat waitress served to them sandwiches, hot coffee, chocolate and tea. And sit-

ting or reclining in their dressing wrappers, Mrs. Lindsay and the girls discussed the refreshments and the incidents of the evening at the same time.

"Poor little Herbert," said Julia Harrison, "I was so sorry for him when he missed. He looked so cut. He did ride splendidly, and Selene looked so pretty and ran so well. But if he had crowned the queen I should have been left out in the cold. As it is, the good little soul is going to make me first maid of honor, for which compliment I thank him most sincerely."

"I wonder who is to be the third maid of honor?" said Emily. "I have not heard whom Horace Dudley is going to crown. Theodore Walker is entitled to choose the second maid of honor; but he is so angry at not winning the first honor that he has conferred the privilege on Ran Carter, who is going to crown Lucy Nelson."

"Oh! I can tell you whom Horace Dudley will crown," exclaimed Julia. "Tom Harrison said it would be Helen Grinnell."

"Then you will have to look your very best, Julia," said her sister, "to make a respectable appearance among the three belles."

"I know it," was the reply, "and I tremble at my own temerity in venturing to put my poor charms in comparison with theirs. But it is such a temptation to wear a tinsel crown even for a few hours, and honors of all sorts are so very scarce hereabouts that I could not resist. And so if you don't want to see the family disgraced, you must help Liza to curl my hair, and must lend me your Valenciennes berthé and pearl jewelry to wear."

Julia evidently thought that from the discovery of America to the present time, this part of the continent, at least, had known no grander occasion than the present, and that no more important event could occur in her own life than preparing to grace it. Her sister and the maid fully shared this conviction; and their intense absorption in the duties of the toilet, their anxious conferences, &c., would have been amusing enough to any one at liberty to observe them. But Mrs. Lindsay, who was scarcely less impressed with the interest and the importance of the occasion than her young guest, was so absorbed in watching and directing her niece's toilet that she did not notice the funny little by-play going on across the large chamber.

To a city belle, who has the opportunity of making and displaying a full-dress costume many times every week, it is a matter of little moment. But a country girl, who rarely has the opportunity of enhancing her charms by the marvellous effects of a ball costume, and who seldom has an opportunity to display those charms, either adorned or unadorned, to more than a dozen people at a time, finds such an occasion as a ball at The Grove the event of a lifetime, a flowery oasis in the dreary desert of rustic monotony.

In the tourney the gentlemen had had an opportunity to display their prowess and to compete for the honors of the day; but the ball-room would afford an arena for the fair sex to display their charms and compete in the winning of hearts, conquering the conquerors. And since this is about the only field open to feminine ambition, can the fair creatures be blamed for rushing into it with such eager *abandon*?

Mrs. Lindsay, who had all the vanity, the love of dress, the fondness for gayety and the petty ambition of the average woman, was reminded by this occasion of like scenes in her youthful career, when as a beauty and a belle she had won flattering social triumphs, the memory

of which was so dear to her heart that she desired nothing higher for her niece than to see Nora repeat her own record. The ball to-night was to be the most elegant entertainment that had enlivened the community for many long years; and Nora, as queen of it, must be the observed of all observers. If every detail of her toilet were not perfectly tasteful and elegant, the aunt felt that it would be an irreparable misfortune, and one for which she herself would be held responsible by the public as well as her own accusing conscience.

Nora, too, although as free from vanity as a pretty and greatly admired young lady can well be, was by no means indifferent to her own arraying. But it was mainly for Russell's sake that she desired to look her very loveliest, to see his look of delighted admiration as his eye would rest upon her.

Both the aunt and the niece were fully satisfied when at length her simple but elegant toilet was completed. Her finely shaped and beautifully poised head was without any ornament but its crown of silky chestnut hair, which fell in softly flowing curls to her waist. Her dress was of soft lustrous white silk with an overdress of white illusion; and a berthé of point lace falling over the low corsage was caught up in the bosom with a cluster of half-blown white moss roses and buds. Her only ornaments, a handsome necklace and bracelets of pearls, seemed to melt into the whiteness of her graceful throat and delicate wrists.

"O, Nora, you are as lovely as a dream," cried Julia and Emily in a breath; and then it was that, turning to smile an acknowledgment of the compliment, Nora and her aunt beheld Julia adorned after the fashion of an Indian princess, with everything in the way of jewelry, &c., that she and Emily jointly possessed.

The idea of chaperoning such a figure made a shiver run through Mrs. Lindsay's frame; and the fear of wounding her and Emily by questioning their good taste complicated the difficulties of the situation. But in desperation, she called up all her tact and courage, and addressed herself to the task of despoiling, adroitly smoothing the way by admiringly exclaiming,

"How nicely your hair is curled, Julia, and how beautifully your dress fits, and look, Nora, what a lovely color she has to-night!" Then the politic lady added, "but, my dear, I would not wear that sash, if I were you; I don't think it is quite the style; and those bows are not becoming; they spoil the contour of your figure. Let me take off this large brooch. And those flowers and the silver comb in your hair will interfere with the adjustment of the crown; you cannot wear them, you see. There that is better; this slender gold arrow is quite enough; such pretty hair as yours ought not to be hidden." And with these insinuating little speeches, her fair hands, with light, deft touches, wandering over the figure of the overdressed girl, scattered ribbons, laces and jewels "as thick as autumn leaves in Valambrosa."

At one end of the hall, upon a little dais covered with crimson velvet, was the mimic throne, gay with gilding and richly adorned with flowers. At the foot of this, the coronation, a pretty, graceful ceremony took place.

Then the queen, surrounded by the maids of honor and the successful knights who formed her mimic court, occupied the throne while receiving the felicitations of her friends and the homage of the knights.

Next the royal set, a quadrille, was formed, and Russell and Nora opened the ball. It was a fairy scene—the beautifully decorated rooms and the throng of lovely girls, and handsome matrons in their pretty

dresses of softly floating gossamer or rich sheeny silks and satins. Then the look of intense enjoyment upon the bright, young faces, the glad smiles wreathing the rosy lips, the low hum of sweet, fresh voices, the ripple of musical laughter, the entrancing strains of the band—how enlivening! how delightful!

The victorious knight was exquisitely dressed this evening, and, animated by the inspiring scene, elate with triumph and with radiant happiness, he looked, as Mrs. Lindsay had said on a former occasion, god-like in his superb beauty. The perfect ease and grace of his movements strikingly displayed the peerless symmetry of his figure. Not even on horseback did he appear to such advantage as in dancing.

Nora, as her slender, beautifully rounded form, in its white drapery, floated gracefully down the room, borne up by the strong arm of her lover, was a vision of loveliness. And the crown of her rare beauty was not so much the shining gloss of her silky hair, the snowy whiteness of neck and brow, the delicate carnation of lip and cheek, the lustrous beaming of the sweet eyes, as the soft, glad light of happiness, fervid and pure, which illuminated her face.

Herbert never danced, so he had nothing to do but gaze at Nora, losing not a single graceful motion, noting every beauty, doing homage in his soul to every charm. As she glided past him, almost within reach of his arms, which he could scarcely restrain from clasping her, he felt that he would gladly give—

“All other bliss  
And all his worldly worth for this—  
To waste his whole heart in one kiss  
Upon her perfect lips.”

And Theodore, who had been sulking ever since he failed in the Tournament to win the first honors, and feeling as if he could kill Russell Thornton for winning the distinction and playing the *role* he coveted, while gazing upon Nora's loveliness, forgot his disappointment and anger, forgot everything but her beauty and his love.

Both his secret and Herbert's would have been plainly read by the company if all eyes had not been fixed in admiration upon the royal pair.

“So stately his form and so lovely her face  
That never a hall such a galliard did grace.”

Mrs. Lindsay, though, when her eye had rested a moment upon her niece in delighted admiration, and had then run around the admiring countenances of the company with delightful satisfaction, began to look about for Herbert. She soon discovered him, and saw, with a pang of sympathy, his wistful eyes fixed upon Nora with a look of blended admiration and despair.

She had not yet given up the hope that, backed by her own and her husband's influence, Herbert might yet be able to supplant Russell Thornton; and she was determined that he should have every opportunity to do so which her authority and finesse could procure him. So she went up to Herbert, linked her arm in his and engaged him in conversation, until Nora had danced three sets. Then, knowing that Herbert's not dancing would deprive him of the opportunity of playing the agreeable to the fair queen, unless the fondness of the latter for that amusement were curbed by some restriction, the politic aunt, still leaning on Herbert's arm, approached her niece and said,

“You really must not dance any more now, my dear. Country

balls, you know, last till a late hour ; and if you go on as you have begun, you will be utterly exhausted before the evening is over. Here, Herbert, I know there is no danger of your inducing her to dance, take her into the parlor and keep her there until I give her leave to dance again."

So amidst entreaties and protests, to which Mrs. Lindsay lent a deaf ear, Herbert walked away with Nora on his arm ; and to this ruse of his devoted partisan, he owed all the pleasure of the evening.

A young gentleman so fascinating as Russell was not likely to suffer for lack of feminine favor. He saw through Mrs. Lindsay's ruse, but he was too sure of his ground to fear her machinations, and so he good naturedly yielded his betrothed to the temporary charge of his rival, and turned for consolation to other fair ones, who received him with flattering cordiality. It was plain that he moved among these susceptible fair ones a veritable king of hearts.

As soon as Theodore Walker perceived Russell engaged in a desperate flirtation with Miss Grinnell, he commenced a series of manœuvres which landed him at Nora's side ; and the reception he received was so gracious as not only to reassure, but to delight him.

Nora was far from being a coquette, and nothing was farther from her thoughts than coquetry at this moment, the kindness of her manner to Theodore being prompted by quite different motives. Young Walker was a sort of connection of the Wyndhams, and the two families of Ingleside and Woodlawn had always visited intimately. Nora felt grateful to the young man for the compliment he had paid her in wearing her favor in the tourney, and she sympathized with his chagrin at being surpassed. She knew, too, how ill-disposed he was towards Russell at all times, and she felt instinctively that the events of the day had increased his dislike of her lover. She could not bear that Russell should have an enemy, and so she was trying to soothe and propitiate Theodore.

When soon after joining her, he invited her to dance the next set with him, her aunt, who highly approved of the handsome, well-born son of the wealthy and talented Judge Walker, immediately removed her restriction in his favor ; and so there was nothing for Nora to do but comply.

When they had finished the set, Nora thought that she had fully discharged her duty, and might hope to be relieved of his attentions. But Theodore had no idea of renouncing her society so soon, or at all during the evening, if he could help himself. When she declined to dance with him again, he so urgently entreated her to promenade with him, and betrayed such irritation when she tried to avoid doing so, that, much against her wishes, she felt forced to yield.

So he led her away in triumph to the long back porch, which a short time before had been thronged with promenaders, but now was quite deserted, almost every one being either engaged in dancing or looking at the dancing.

Now a *tête-à-tête* with Theodore was the very last thing in the world which Nora desired. Indeed, for more than a month past, on numerous occasions, she had been compelled to tax her ingenuity to the utmost to avoid being alone with him. She was so discomfited at finding what a snare she had fallen into, that her graciousness and affability quite deserted her. But Theodore was too well satisfied with the situation to observe this, and went on talking with great animation of the beauty of the night, the delightfulness of the occasion, &c. Next he descanted ex-

thusiastically upon the extraordinary array of beauty gracing the ball, and assured her that in the rare galaxy of female loveliness she herself shone preëminent; that much as he had always admired her, he had never thought her so peerlessly beautiful as to-night. Then into her shrinking ear he poured a passionate declaration of love, and urged his suit with such vehemence as to frighten her. When at last he paused for her reply, she told him kindly but very positively, that, although appreciating the compliment he had paid her, she could give him only her friendship.

He was so intensely selfish by nature, and so spoiled by unlimited indulgence in his home education, that he could ill brook the slightest disappointment; and anything like opposition to his wishes, even in minor matters, never failed to infuriate him.

• "Don't talk to me of friendship," he exclaimed fiercely. "Nothing short of your love will satisfy me; and I will not lightly abandon the hope of obtaining that. Tell me what I can do to win your heart."

"Nothing," she replied; "nothing you could ever do or be could win my heart."

"Why?—because it is already won?" he demanded.

When she vouchsafed no reply to this query, he grew very angry, and said in a rude, peremptory tone, "Tell me the truth; after what I have told you I have a right to demand it; are you already engaged to be married?"

Nora having become indignant at his rudeness, replied with offended dignity, "Permit me to decline further catechising. Having given a polite and candid answer to your proposal, I feel at liberty to refuse any further discussion of the subject."

Frantic with jealous rage, he grasped her arm fiercely, and glaring at her, cried in a raised tone of mingled rage and derision,

"Yes, you *are engaged*, and to Russell Thornton. Your preference for him is so openly displayed that he who runs may read. I was blind not to see it with the rest of the world—blinded by my love and my high opinion of you. I could not believe that a lady of your intelligence, birth and refinement would marry one so infinitely her inferior—would ever condescend to an intimate connection and familiar association with his vulgar, illiterate mother and her ignorant, brutal husband. A charming family circle and a most harmonious household, he has to offer you. I quite envy you your prospective felicity, Miss Wyndham."

In his excitement Theodore had stopped immediately in front of one of the dining-room windows; and both he and Nora were too much agitated to observe that it was open, and that just within it, Col. Wilcox and Russell Thornton were standing together and discussing in a low tone some arrangements about the supper, which was almost ready to be announced.

Theodore's raised voice attracted the attention of both, and they plainly saw and heard the concluding scene. Springing over the low window-sill, Russell tore Theodore's hand from Nora's arm, and dashed him off with such force that the rejected lover fell prone upon the floor, and lay sprawling there ingloriously a moment before he could recover from the shock and regain his feet.

Without deigning even another glance at Theodore, Russell drew Nora's arm within his own, and hurried her out of the porch into the lighted grounds, where only a few gentlemen were gathered in groups smoking and talking politics.

Nora was trembling with anger and mortification, and Russell was at first too excited to trust himself to speak. But when they had silently proceeded a few yards, he disposed of Theodore in a few sentences of biting sarcasm, and then reverted to the blissful theme which Mrs. Lindsay's advent in the garden at Ingleside had interrupted a few evenings before.

But it seemed that the fates were not propitious to their loves; for they were soon joined by Col. Wilcox, who, highly scandalized at what had occurred, had, by dint of much pleading and very strong language, won Theodore's promise that the affair should proceed no further between him and Thornton, and had then come to secure a similar pledge from Russell.

Nora, who felt compromised by what had already occurred, seconded the Colonel's petition; and the latter, after seeing her to the door of the dressing room, walked away with Russell to find Theodore, and patch up a sort of truce between the two fiery young spirits.

Although Nora seemed very gay during the rest of the evening, and danced so much that her aunt had again to interfere and send her off promenading with Herbert, yet the painful and humiliating scene on the porch had quite spoiled her pleasure in the evening; and she was glad when they took their seats in the carriage for the long, tedious night ride through the dark, damp air, which momentarily threatened rain.

At a late hour the next morning, the jaded revellers awoke to find the rain coming down in torrents upon the drenched and dreary earth. The storm was accompanied by a high wind, which rising in sudden gusts dashed the sheets of blinding rain against the windows with a force that threatened to drive them in; and between these wild assaults of the elements the glimpses obtained of the prospect without were gloomy in the extreme—the leaden sky, the sodden earth, and the bare trees, so suddenly stripped of their brilliant foliage bending before the howling blast.

Chilled and depressed by this dismal change in the weather, this harsh and unwelcome announcement of the departure of the bright summer and the advent of the stern winter, the Lindsays and their guests gathered around the fire, which formed the only cheerful feature of the scene, and strove to entertain and enliven each other. In his efforts to rise to the emergency, Tom Harrison outshone himself; and Nora declared that it was for such days as this people like Tom were created. But even Tom's spirits began to flag as the clock was on the stroke of nine P. M.; and to conceal their own dullness, as well as to make up the sleep lost the preceding night, they unanimously voted to retire to their chambers at that barbarously early hour.

All night the storm continued with unabated fury; but towards morning there was a lull, and soon after breakfast the rain ceased, though the sky was dark, and heavy masses of clouds drifted hither and thither before the shifting wind.

The prospect for this day was scarcely brighter than the preceding day. But although the weather was still threatening, the Harrison's took their departure about noon, Tom averring that his domestic affairs imperatively demanded his presence at home.

Mrs. Lindsay had been suffering with neuralgia during the forenoon, and Nora had been in close attendance upon her; but after dinner, as her aunt had fallen asleep, she joined Herbert in the library, where he was reading alone, Mr. Lindsay having ridden out on the farm.

It was still cloudy and chilly, but a bright wood fire made the room cosy. Herbert, who dearly loved heat, being a native of the "sunny South," was lounging in his favorite arm-chair before the hearth, with a book open on his knee, though his eye often wandered from its pages to where Nora sat near the window intently reading.

It was not her first perusal of *Ivanhoe*, but the Tournament having reminded her of this charming tale of mediæval times, and having nothing new to read, she had taken it up to while away the gloomy afternoon. Presently she closed the volume, and looking up said,

"This is a delightful book, Herbert."

"Yes," he replied, "the best of the Waverly Novels, I think."

"But poor Rebecca," observed Nora, "I cannot be reconciled to her fate—it is too sad. Hers was too noble and generous a nature to be doomed to suffer the pangs of unrequited love." Then after a pause apparently of self-communing, she added in a low, earnest tone, "It must be terrible."

"It is," he replied in a tone of despairing bitterness, while his cheeks paled and a spasm of pain contracted his brows.

"Why, Herbert," exclaimed his companion in a tone of mingled surprise and pity, "you speak so earnestly that one might imagine you possess some experimental knowledge of such a calamity. Pray, have any of the girls been so cruel as to reject the offer of your heart?"

"The offer has never been made. I only judge from appearances and indications scarcely pointed enough to describe that if it were made, it would be rejected."

"Then you are wrong to despair so soon," she said; "if you judge only from slight indications that your love is not returned, there is great probability of your being mistaken. I think you must be; for I do not believe any woman of sense and feeling could lightly reject a heart so pure and noble as yours. Tell me whose ear you wish to gain, and I will plead for you," she added, sitting down on a low ottoman at his feet, and crossing her hands on the arm of his chair, while she leaned forward in a listening attitude with a look of tender interest upon her upturned face.

Her naïveté, her composure, and the total absence of self-consciousness, all ought to have convinced him that she entertained for him only a sisterly affection. But love is blind, passion, mad. A wild hope sprang up in his heart, and an intoxicating rapture shot through his soul, overthrowing reason in a kind of feverish delirium. Seizing Nora's hands convulsively, he cried,

"Then plead with yourself, dear Nora, for it is *you* whom I love, have always loved, will ever love while my heart continues to throb with life."

This sudden and startling declaration excited in Nora the strongest emotion. Surprise, distress and self-reproach—the latter caused by the suspicion that her own conduct, in reality so artless, but apparently so artful, had drawn from him the confession so long suppressed—were all read by Herbert in the countenance that for one moment was raised to his face, then buried in her hands as she burst into tears.

In that one moment he read his fate. Her tears answered him more effectually than words could have done. The painful truth against which he had so vainly struggled settled coldly upon his heart. The maddening conflict in his soul ended in a grim and terrible despair which seemed to paralyze his every faculty.

For awhile there was dead silence between them, only broken by Nora's slight sobs. Then laying his hand tenderly on her bowed head, Herbert said in his gentlest tones:

"Do not weep for me, dear Nora. I read in your silence and your tears all that your kind heart finds it too painful to say. Reason had long since told me that you loved another; but hope, love's strong ally, kept whispering that there was room for doubt; and so judgment was warped. But now that I know the truth I will bear it like a man. And may God bless and keep you always, dear sister—for that I may still call you; and as a sister I may always love you."

Looking up through her tears, she said pleadingly:

"Oh! Herbert, can you ever forgive me?"

"Forgive you!" he repeated, "for what? That you are so beautiful and so good? Yes, as I forgive the flowers for blooming, the birds for singing, and the sun for shining."

Mechanically he arose and went out of the room and out of the house, trying to find in the open air relief for the choking sensation which was stifling him.

## CHAPTER IV.

Scarcely knowing whither his footsteps were tending, Herbert went into the garden. Crushed as he was by bitter disappointment and sorrow, he could but note the sad change which cold and wind and rain had wrought, where, a few days since, were so much bloom and beauty. The blackened leaves and withered, faded flowers seemed to reflect the blight that had fallen upon his hopes and affections. Like that storm-swept garden, his heart seemed all waste and desolation. He knew that the spring sunshine would again warm the naked shrubs and brown beds to life and beauty; but he could not believe that the sunshine of another love would ever bring back the bloom and brightness to his stricken life.

Gloomy and miserable, he wandered aimlessly along the leaf-strewn walks amid the naked shrubs and drooping flowers. A chilling mist rose up from the dark valley to meet the lowering, leaden sky; and ever and anon the wind swept in low, moaning gusts over the bleak hills. It was a dismal scene. He felt that indeed

"The melancholy days had come,  
"The saddest of the year,  
"Of weeping skies and wailing winds,  
"And meadows dark and sere."

In his restless misery he wandered on and on, out of the garden, over the fields, as if he could flee from the demon of despair, which threatened to enthrall him.

Under the wild surges of passion which swept over his soul his mental faculties seemed at first to lie dormant, but after awhile the strong, clear reason which was wont to dominate his spirit, aroused and began to assert itself. He asked himself how and why the failure to win a woman's heart should crush all hope out of his life and make his existence a dreary blank. He remembered that he had still left to him youth and health, a good mind, an excellent education, an ample fortune, a host of friends; and he asked himself was it rational to let one disappointment embitter a life crowned by so many blessings. His intellect pronounced his wild despair the sheerest folly; but his yearning heart ached on none the less keenly.

Then conscience awoke. He asked himself how a heart vowed to the worship of the Creator dared set its affections thus upon a creature—how a life consecrated to the service of God could lose all aim and interest through the whim of man. He said to himself, "And I call myself a Christian! I claim to seek *first* the kingdom of God and His righteousness! Where are my high resolves, my cherished aims to live and labor for the glory of God and the good of men? Alas! that they should have been set aside by earthly hopes and loves, then stifled by despair! Hypocrite and idolater, abject and miserable, how grievously am I sinning!"

Then his heart framed a voiceless petition, the spirit's cry for pardon and consolation.

He had left the open fields now and entered a deep, gloomy forest, known as the Beechwood, that bordered the creek which formed the line between Ingleside and Brantley. Again he noticed the devastation of the storm and sighed over the desolate look of the trees with their naked branches, from which a few faded leaves fluttered drearily in the chill wind. And as his feet crushed the fallen leaves that lately glowed so rich and bright in the sunshine, now heaped dark and discolored upon the cold, wet earth, he thought, as so many other sad spirits have done, how typical they were of earthly hopes and human loves.

Presently his aimless wanderings brought him to a favorite summer haunt of his, a sort of sylvan bower, where in fine weather he would sometimes spend a whole morning or afternoon with a book. This spot, an angle formed by the converging banks of the river and Tapsico Creek, was a little mossy knoll rising up from a tract of marshy land, and crowned in the centre by a huge beech tree, whose knarled, knotty trunk and high, rough roots, as well as the cavity in the side, betokened great age. All the sides of the knoll, up to within a few feet of the trunk of the tree, were covered with a thick growth of young cedars and laurel bushes, which formed around the old beech a leafy screen, where the sunshine never penetrated except in flickering patches. The profound quiet and privacy of the spot, and a soft cushion of green moss between two projecting roots, formed its chief attractions for Herbert. Here on a bright summer's day he liked to sit, reading from a pocket edition of some favorite poet, scribbling his random thoughts in his note-book or watching the birds and squirrels flitting and frisking amid the green boughs overhead.

This evening, strewn with faded leaves and dripping with moisture, it was much less attractive than usual. But absorbed in his sad thoughts he scarcely noticed this. Exhausted by the violence of his emotions and his rapid tramp through the fields, he threw himself upon the damp moss at the foot of a tree, and, with his face buried in his hands, sat rigid and motionless. Wholly absorbed in the stern conflict within, where reason, conscience and will were wrestling with passion and despair. He heeded not the gathering mist and the deepening twilight, nor the chill which was numbing his weary limbs.

Presently his attention was attracted by the splashing of oars in the creek. Listening he heard a boat drawn upon shore, and soon after the heavy tramp of footsteps approaching his direction. It was nearly dark, and as the weather and hour were entirely unfavorable to hunting and fishing, he wondered what could be bringing any one to this remote spot in the very heart of an unfrequented forest.

The footsteps drew constantly nearer. There seemed to be two men, and they moved heavily, as if carrying some weighty burden between them. Leaning forward, Herbert peered through his bushy screen and saw two men approaching and bearing between them the body of another. Nearer and nearer they came, until within a few yards of his covert, when they stopped and laid their burden upon the ground. The limbs fell limp from the hands of the bearers, and the body lay perfectly motionless at their feet, while they stood nearly as still above it, resting and breathing heavily.

A horrid suspicion darted through the mind of the startled watcher.

What if he were in the presence of a great crime—if these were two murderers and their victim! The very thought curdled his blood.

Eagerly through the deepening gloom, his eyes sought the face of the prostrate form. It was turned towards him, and so near that even in that dim light he saw it plainly. With indescribable horror, he recognized lineaments with which he was painfully familiar, but which, in their present livid distortion, were more hideous than anything he had ever conceived.

The bloodshot eyes, glazed and meaningless, stared full at him with a ghastly glare. The heavy jaws hung down, the coarse blue lips were wide apart, and the dirty, jagged teeth grinned horribly. The grizzly hair, matted in wild disorder around the ghastly face, was clotted with blood, which continued to ooze from a dark wound in the temple.

Herbert's heart stood still, and the blood seemed to freeze in his veins, as he recognized that he was indeed face to face with murder, the involuntary witness to its closing scene.

But a far greater shock awaited him. Mechanically his eyes wandered from the corpse to the men who stood above it. One of them he saw to be a negro, though in the shadowy twilight he could not recognize the dusky features.

Just at this moment, the other man drew out his handkerchief from his pocket and wiped from his brow the moisture produced by his late violent exertion. In doing so, he lifted the broad hat which had hitherto concealed his features, and, to Herbert's appalled vision, was revealed almost the last face in the world he would have expected or desired to behold.

Except to snap the chord of life, a thunderbolt could not have wrought more powerfully upon his stricken being. All power of speech and motion was lost; bodily sensation and moral emotion were suspended—only perception took in the minutest particulars of the fearful scene, and memory indelibly preserved them to his dying day.

"Dick," said the white man—and oh! how the husky voice thrilled the horror-stricken listener—"go to the boat and bring the spades and shovel—or stay, I will bring them myself."

"Never mind, Mars —," replied the cunning negro, also afraid to remain alone with the corpse, "I reckon it will take us both."

Then they went off together, the white man leading the way and the negro following closely. When they were gone, reason sent a faint suggestion through the dazed mind of Herbert that now was his opportunity to escape from the fearful scene. But his system seemed paralyzed; the chilled nerves refused to bear the message to the rigid muscles; and, as one in a horrible nightmare, he remained motionless, his staring eyes fixed upon the ghastly, bloody corpse.

The men soon returned with the necessary implements and commenced digging a grave. It was heavy work in that stiff, wet soil, but they worked without a moment's flagging, save now and then to dash off with one hand the great drops of sweat that ran down their faces.

The daylight died away, and the moon came out, pallid and ghostly, from amid the gloomy, restless clouds—now shining through a mass of vapor with a faint, grey light, sufficient to make shadows dark and indistinct of every form, animate and inanimate—then looking down coldly, calmly, searchingly upon the struggling, toiling and terror-haunted grave-diggers, upon the ghastly corpse with its pallid face and glassy eyes, and upon that other face behind the cedar bushes, not less pallid, but

whose wild eyes shot forth a burning ray of horror and anguish. The wind rose with a low, sobbing sound, and crept dolefully through the rustling tree tops, blending its moans with the heavy, labored breathing of the murderers, who now often paused to listen at every sound of rustling leaves. Finally, the task was done and the body dragged forward for interment, when the grave was found to be too short.

"Double him up," said a low, husky voice.

"*Can't* Mars ———," replied the negro in a sepulchral whisper, "he done got stiff."

"Then cut off his limbs with your axe; we have no time to lengthen the grave."

"Ain't there no other way?" asked the other deprecatingly.

"If your heart fails you, Dick, give me the axe," was the rejoinder.

And grasping the axe firmly, he raised it high and brought it down with force. The noise of the blows and the sharp cracking of the bones sounded loud and hollow through the still, deep forest, and startled the man so that he let the axe fall. But quickly recovering himself, he cut off the other limb; and the body was rolled in the grave, falling with a dull heavy thud. They then proceeded to gather up everything bearing a trace of blood, which they cast into the grave before filling it up.

This latter task was soon accomplished, when, after trampling it quite flat, they brought armfuls of dead leaves and spread them over it to hide the fresh earth. Then they cut down young cedars out of the surrounding thicket, the negro using his axe and his master a dirk, with which he hacked spasmodically at the smaller bushes. These they ingeniously stuck in a clump over the grave. Next they gathered up the tools, and were preparing to depart, when the following dialogue took place:

"Now, Dick," said the master, "I will go to ——— and change my clothes. You must go home at once and do the same. Then come to see me there, and I will give you these garments, which you must burn with yours, taking the greatest care not to be seen by anyone in the world. And be sure that you burn every scrap—there might be blood upon them which you would fail to see—for my part, I feel like I am dripping with gore. To-morrow morning, before daybreak, you must come down here and sink the boat. And I entreat you to be very careful and cautious in all you do. Above all things, keep silent, no matter what may happen. Don't even think about what you have seen and done to-night, for fear you might speak of it in your sleep. You know I will have it in my power to reward you richly; and you know well that I will do it.

"Never trouble yourself about me, sir. I knows how to keep a secret; and I'd die before I'd bring you to harm. I loved my dear old master too well not to serve his son faithfully."

"Hush!" said the other huskily, "not a word of my father. Oh! that I should be his son—an outcast, a Cain among my brethren."

And with a groan, he started forward, his eyes bent wildly upon the dark, hurrying clouds, his features convulsed in agony, and his blood-stained hands clasped above his head.

As he did so, the handkerchief with which he had been wiping his face fell from his hands and lodged in a bush behind him. Not noting nor heeding his loss, the victim of a terrible remorse walked hurriedly away beside the negro; and the sound of their rapidly retreating footsteps soon died away upon the still, night air.

The wind was lulled to rest, the thin, moving clouds had settled together in a heavy bank along the eastern horizon, and the moon, high in

the heavens, was shining in undimmed brightness ere Herbert recovered volition and the power of motion.

Through the deep silence of the sombre forest was heard an ominous whirr of wings, and from the top of the old beech-tree issued the long, wild, shuddering shriek of the screech owl. This hideous sound breaking upon the profound stillness, caused Herbert to start violently; and the motion having quickened the sluggish current of his chilled blood, he was able, by clinging to the bushes, to rise to his feet.

His first impulse was to secure the handkerchief he had seen dropped; and he tottered to the fatal spot where the withered leaves and fresh green boughs above the loose earth concealed such a terrible secret. This was soon done; and as he shook out the soiled cambric, the name he had expected to find stood out as glaringly, it seemed to him, as the noonday sun in the heavens. And still more glaring, making him shudder at its fearful distinctness, was a long smear of blood.

He stood a moment irresolute, then turned toward the hollow beech. As he did so, his foot struck against a hard substance, which gave forth a metallic ring, and stooping, he discovered among the dead leaves the dirk which had been used in cutting down the cedars. On the silver handle of this, was carved the same name that had startled him so on the handkerchief. As he raised the weapon from the earth, he muttered in a hoarse whisper,

"He was always careless."

Tottering back to the old beech, he wrapped the handkerchief around the dirk and thrust both deep into its cavity.

And then he turned to leave the lonely terror-haunted wood. Numb with the chilling dampness and with grief and horror, weak as an infant, shivering and panting, he staggered across the moonlit valley, painfully dragging his cold feet through the clogging soil.

To describe his state of mind and feeling is simply impossible. There are heights and depths of misery which tongue and pen are powerless to portray. Amid the surging billows of anguish, one thought made itself prominent. Dragging wearily along the way by which he had come, he remembered that when on his way to the wood, he had thought his cup of misery so full that nothing could add to it another drop of bitterness. Now, if he could wipe out the terrible scene he had witnessed there, and go back to only the troubles he had thought so heavy, he would consider himself happy and blest.

At last, after what seemed an eternity of misery and toil, he reached the house. His watchful dogs ran out to meet him with a low glad bark, whinnying around him, leaping upon him and licking his cold hands. But he had for them no answering caress. The sight of them awakened associations that pierced his heart anew.

The family had all retired and the house was dark and still. But the back door had been left unlocked for him, and he crept noiselessly to his chamber without arousing any one. He had been fearing a meeting with his uncle in his unnerved and disordered condition, which must have excited inquiry.

The fire had died down, and his room was dark and chill; but from the well filled wood box beside the chimney, he soon rekindled it, and hovering over the ruddy flame, tried vainly to warm himself. Fire could not warm him. His teeth continued to chatter and his whole frame to shiver with the violent shock to his nervous system, rather than long exposure to the low temperature of the damp night air.

On his heart lay a sorrow compared with which all he had ever suffered up to within the last few hours was light indeed; and in his mind was a conflict the keenest, the sternest of his whole life.

Except the perpetrators, he knew that besides himself no living soul knew aught of the fearful crime that had just been committed; and their measures had been so well taken that any clue which might lead to its discovery seemed impossible. In his hands, then, lay the destiny of the two beings dearest of all the world to him. Should he keep silent and let matters take their course, what if in after years the blood of the murdered man should cry out from the ground—if some of those marvelous discoveries and coincidences which have established the adage "Murder will out," should bring the honored head of a happy family to the gallows, breaking the heart of a loving wife, loading innocent children with infamy, and entailing upon them the curse which rests upon the shedder of blood.

On the other hand, should he disclose the secret, a bright and vigorous young life must immediately pay the forfeit, and another happy existence be blighted forever. All the painful and harrowing scenes incident to the arrest, the trial, the condemnation and the execution of the murderer, passed in vivid detail through his excited imagination. He groaned aloud in his mighty agony. His heart wept blood.

No thought of himself; of his desires or disappointments, entered into this mental conflict. His late rivalry, with all the bitterness and mortification it had engendered, was quite forgotten. The love which had so engrossed his being only asserted itself in the desire to screen its object from shame and anguish.

At length his resolution was taken. Any evils which could result from his silence were doubtful and remote. The fatal results of his disclosure of the dread secret must be certain and immediate. He could not lift his hand to place the noose around a neck that his arm had encircled a thousand times in loving embraces. He could not plunge a dagger into the warmest, tenderest, purest heart that ever beat. Nay, right or wrong, justice must take care of itself. He would obey the merciful instinct of his nature, even were it to his soul's undoing.

When his wood was all burnt out, and his candle, after a ghostly flickering, had died away in the socket, he went, still numb and shivering, to bed—but only to toss and groan and shudder through the dark hours, each one of which seemed an eternity of suffering. At last, bodily agony came mercifully to numb the more fearful pain of mental torture. His head ached violently, and every bone in his body felt as if upon the rack. And so the morning found him.

When he did not appear at breakfast, and the servant who had been sent to summon him reported that he was not well enough to rise, Mrs. Lindsay looked very grave. From her chamber window on the preceding evening, she had seen him rush out of the house, pace distractedly up and down the garden, then wander away across the fields through the fog. And going into the library soon after, she had found Nora crouched upon the ottoman, with her hands crossed upon the arms of Herbert's chair, weeping bitterly. She had immediately surmised what had transpired; and when he had failed to appear at supper and was now reported too unwell to join them at breakfast, her surmise was confirmed. Involuntarily, almost unconsciously, she cast a reproachful glance at Nora, under which the latter winced and looked so wretched that her aunt could not help pitying her.

Having had a waiter prepared with a cup of strong, green tea, a thin slice of toast and a soft boiled egg, Mrs. Lindsay took it herself into Herbert's room. As she drew near the bed and caught sight of the face usually so gentle and tranquil, she received a severe shock. It was now ghastly white, the eyes sunken and encircled with wide dark rings, the lips drawn and purple—his whole form indeed seemed shrunk and broken, with all the life and vigor crushed out of it.

She knew that, with a good deal of manliness and unusual moral strength, he possessed the gentleness, tenderness and exquisite sensibility of a woman; she had seen how deeply he loved Nora and how keenly he was suffering from jealousy and suspense, and so it never occurred to her that his present condition could be due to anything but her niece's rejection of his suit.

Bending over him, she passed her arm around his neck, and, pressing her lips to his cheek, said,

"My poor boy, how you are suffering!"

Perfectly unmanned, he threw his arms around her neck and burst into tears.

"I am almost as much grieved as you are, dear Herbert," she said, "and so disappointed in Nora! I have no patience with her blindness and folly."

"Don't blame her," he replied. "How could she help it? Love is not a matter of reason and volition."

"Not of reason, certainly, or she could never have preferred Russell to you. This silly caprice of hers is a sad disappointment of my hopes and plans. I can never be reconciled to seeing her his wife; and with all my heart I wish that something may occur to prevent their marriage."

"Oh! don't say that," he exclaimed with a perceptible shudder, then added, "Think how it would grieve her!"

"Well, I think it is very probable that she will suffer less in losing him than in marrying him. Just think of her, with her exquisite refinement and dainty fastidiousness, having to associate intimately with his family, calling Mrs. Bratton mother, and necessarily brought into familiar contact with her horrid, disgusting husband."

"For Heaven's sake, say no more," he groaned, writhing under her words. "Never call the names of any of them to me again. I cannot, indeed I cannot bear it!"

And his face became blue, his teeth began to chatter, his whole form to shiver, like one in an ague. Alarmed at these symptoms, she summoned a servant, applied mustard plasters and bottles of hot water, and administered a strong mint julep. When these remedies had warmed and quieted him, she prevailed on him to drink the tea and to take an anodyne; and she sat by him, bathing his head and rubbing his hands, until he fell asleep.

He slept many hours, and awoke so much relieved that he was able to take some of the chicken broth his aunt brought to his bedside. Then, under her kind and gentle ministrations, he soon fell asleep again.

When he awoke from this second slumber, his head was easy, though it felt light and dizzy, and there was a fearful oppression about his heart. Still he was calm, and strong enough to consider the situation and to form plans for immediate action. It was now dark, and he was alone, but soon Mr. Lindsay came in.

"I hope you feel better, my boy," he said affectionately, as he pressed Herbert's hand. "Your aunt and I are deeply concerned about

you. You have doubtless taken cold from being out too much in the damp air. At this season, the weather is so changeable that one cannot be too careful."

"Yes, sir; I think I have taken cold, but it is nothing serious. I shall be all right in the morning, I think. At any rate, I hope so, for I am anxious to take the boat at ten o'clock for Richmond."

"Take the boat for Richmond—what does that mean?"

"It only means that I am going to the seminary, to prepare to enter the ministry, which has always been my intention."

"But I thought you had concluded to remain at Ingleside this winter and read under the direction of our pastor, Mr. Dana, then go to the seminary next fall. It seems to me that would be the better plan. You have been at school and college so closely so many years, that before entering upon a long theological course, I think it advisable for you to rest, or partially rest a year."

"I thought of that at one time, but I have concluded that it would be wiser to enter the seminary at the beginning of the course and go straight through. I am anxious to get to work."

"Well, my dear boy, if you must go to the seminary this fall, there is no need for you to rush off to-morrow. You are not well enough to travel, and must stay with us until you are stronger."

"Oh! I am strong enough to go to Richmond; you know that is a short journey, and not at all fatiguing by the boat. I expect to stay there several days before going on to the seminary."

"Well, what has got into everybody for running off all at once?" exclaimed Mr. Lindsay. "Nora has just received a note from Russell Thornton, telling her that he will take the boat to-night for Baltimore. He told us at the Tournament that he was expecting to start almost any day, and promised to come and take leave of us before going. He writes, though, that he has to leave hurriedly and unexpectedly, as the situation offered him is a very good one and must be filled immediately. I don't think Nora likes his not bidding good-by in person; but, for my part, I commend his promptness. I think it argues well for his career as a business man—don't you?"

"Yes," said Herbert faintly, "it is the best thing he could do. I am very glad he has gone to Baltimore."

Mr. and Mrs. Lindsay spent a part of the evening in their nephew's room; and on going out, the latter administered another dose of the anodyne, which secured him a good night's sleep. The next morning, he arose at the usual hour, and at once commenced preparations for his journey.

At breakfast, there was much awkwardness and constraint. Mrs. Lindsay had the night before acquainted her husband with the cause of Herbert's departure, and he was as almost as much dissatisfied as his wife with the turn matters had taken. The aunt looked grave and sad, the uncle awkward and uncomfortable, Herbert pale and wretched, Nora grieved and condemned. Very little was eaten by any of them, and scarcely a word spoken.

When the cart had driven off to the landing with Herbert's trunk, and his horse had been brought to the door, he bade adieu to his uncle and aunt, then sought Nora, to tell her good-bye. He found her in the library standing by the window, and looking almost as sad as he felt. He took the hand she silently offered him in both of his own and said tremulously:

"Good-bye, dear Nora; may you always be as happy as you deserve to be."

She lifted his hand to her lips, and as she did so a tear fell upon it. Then she turned and walked quickly out of the room.

During his absence from Ingleside, Herbert found his uncle a most satisfactory correspondent: for he not only wrote with great promptness and regularity, but with minuteness, and in an easy, colloquial style which made a letter from him almost equal to a personal interview. Shortly after Herbert's arrival at the seminary he received a letter from home. Never in his life had he been so excited at the receipt of a letter, so anxious to know the contents of one. And eagerly he unfolded and read the following epistle:

"INGLESIDE, October 25th, 18—.

"*My Dear Nephew*,—Your aunt and myself suffered much uneasiness on your account after you had left us, fearing that you might be on the verge of a dangerous illness; and so you may be sure your letter written from Richmond was gladly received. We are much relieved and gratified that you are quite well, and hope that the change of air and scene will still further improve your health and revive your spirits.

"Ingleside has seemed quite lonely since your departure. A few days after you left us, Nora went to visit Julia and Emily Harrison; and she writes that she will remain there during November to attend a wedding that is coming off in the neighborhood, at Branden, I believe. I do not remember which of the girls is going to be married, but the prospective bridegroom is Phil Douglas, of Norfolk. I think you were at college with him, and perhaps you know him. He is well spoken of, and Nora says the family are very well satisfied with the match.

"Your aunt's health is very good. She is, you know, quite busy at this season preparing the negroes' winter clothes, which is a heavy job, as both weavers and seamstresses are so slow. I think she gets more disgusted every day with the "peculiar institution;" and, to tell the truth, ours is far from being a bed of roses.

"Everything is going on well on the plantation. I think the corn crop will turn out a hundred barrels more than last year, owing to the improved drainage of the lower field. The wheat, too, is looking unusually well. The young Devon cow I bought at Westover in May has a fine calf a few days old. You know it is of the best stock in the State, and it is a real beauty.

"I think it is probable you may have seen in the Richmond papers some notice of Mr. Bratton's death. Just the day before you left Ingleside, I think it was, he started alone in a small boat to visit a plantation of his wife's some miles down the river. As he was in the habit of spending several days at a time there, carousing with his boon companions, his wife thought nothing of his absence till two days later the overseer from the farm went to Brantley and said he had not seen Bratton for two weeks. She sent immediately for me, and when I got to Brantley I found there several of Bratton's friends, prominent among them Jim Darby, who bought that little farm of Ned Turner's, adjoining the Thornton estate.

"Mrs. Bratton admitted that her husband was very drunk when he left home; and as the river was much swollen by the late rain, the current strong, the wind high, and the boat old and rather shaky, we all concluded that he must have been drowned—that is, all of the company but

Darby. He insisted that 'Dave,' as he styled him, had been murdered by the 'Thornton niggers,' and he wanted to have some of them arrested and taken before a magistrate.

"But on close investigation there was not a shadow of evidence to sustain this suspicion. Mrs. Bratton scouted the idea, and said that none of the negroes knew of her husband's going to the lower plantation but the house servants, and to her certain knowledge none of these had been outside of the yard during the afternoon.

"There is no doubt of his having been drowned; and as soon as we had convinced Darby of the fact, we commenced a search for the body. It was several days before the water fell sufficiently to admit of dragging the river. As we failed to find the body, the presumption is that it was either caught under some of the snags with which the river abounds, or it has been carried down by the current. Most people incline to the latter opinion, as about that time two men who were crossing James river in a boat a little below the mouth of the Chickahominy, saw a human body floating on the water. They tried to get it ashore, but the night was so dark and the river so rough that they did not succeed. Undoubtedly it was Bratton's body.

"The widow, greatly to her own credit and everybody else's wonder, seemed distressed at Bratton's loss. But I think the rest of us can bear it. Certain it is that young Thornton will not break his heart over his step-father's demise. Mrs. Bratton has written for her son to return at once to Brantley, and says it is her intention to surrender the whole estate to him as soon as he arrives. Truly, it is an ill wind that blows nobody any good.

"I suppose you are scarcely so absorbed in your theological studies as to have lost all interest in politics, especially the Texas question, which is assuming such prominence. Col. Tyler delivered an address on the subject last court day, which was listened to with great attention. My views with regard to the admission of this young republic to the Federal Union have not changed at all.

"Your aunt sends much love, and entreats that you will be careful of your health, avoid the night air, and not study too late.

"Your affectionate uncle,

"WILLIAM LINDSAY."

The pained and anxious expression with which Herbert had opened this letter passed off with the reading of it, leaving only the settled sadness that had now become habitual to him. "So that is all settled," he murmured, as he refolded the letter and put it in his pocket.

And he thought, as he walked slowly back from the postoffice to his lodgings, that as Russell was now coming back to Brantley, master of the fine old mansion, the broad, fertile fields and a host of trained servants, there was nothing to prevent his immediate marriage with Nora. A short and happy courtship would culminate in a brilliant wedding; then the old house at Brantley, repaired and freshly adorned, would receive the lovely bride.

As he thought of all this, his imagination pictured the various accompanying scenes. He saw Russell coming and going unceremoniously at all hours between the two homesteads, consulting Nora's taste about the repairs and decorations, Mr. Lindsay riding every day to Brantley to criticise and advise, Mrs. Lindsay busy and interested in preparing the trousseau and making ready for the wedding fête. He thought, too, of the sensa-

tion that the marriage of two such prime favorites of society would create in the community—of the succession of dinner and tea parties that would be given in their honor. Then he thought of the loneliness of his voluntary exile from scenes and friends erst so dear. And above all, he thought of that dark and terrible secret which never left his mind night or day. He thought of all this, though, not with the poignant anguish it would have awakened a few weeks ago, but with a dull, heavy aching that nothing could wholly ease.

By his pious mother Herbert had been dedicated in his infancy to the Christian ministry, and had been carefully reared to fill and adorn that holy calling. He had never thought of any other career, and every act of his life had been consistent with his Christian profession and his avowed purpose to take his place among the watchmen of Zion. But during the past year the eager struggle for academic honors, and the rapid development of his unfortunate love, had been very prejudicial to his spiritual interests. Now, the disappointment that had crushed his hopes of earthly happiness had sent him broken and contrite to the only source of consolation. The shock immediately following his rejection, which had revealed to him such unsuspected depths of human depravity, such limitless possibilities of human misery, awoke him to a most vivid conception of the heinousness of sin and of the fearful thralldom in which it holds mankind. From this conception had sprung an infinite pity for fallen man, an ardent desire to do battle in his own life and person with the arch enemy of suffering humanity. And never before had his soul burned with such fervid love for that Divine Being who gave himself a ransom for man and ever liveth to make intercession for the sins of the world. Sublime thoughts and pure and lofty emotions could not fail to raise his soul above the stormy region of earthly cares and sorrows to that higher plane where reigns the peace of God.

He had always been a diligent student, and his present studies being particularly adapted to his cast of mind, greatly interested him. Besides, he knew that only in keeping his mind constantly occupied with other things could he exclude from his thoughts those things it was so important he should forget. Then, in addition to the regular course of study, he kept up his customary reading of history and the best Greek and Latin authors.

This completely filled up his mornings and evenings; and in the afternoon he would take long walks through the country, often stopping to ask for water, or on some pretext, at the poorest cabins he saw. In this way, he became acquainted with a great many poor and ignorant people, to whose relief and instruction he gladly devoted his leisure hours.

On Sunday afternoons he conducted a colored Sabbath school near the seminary, which interested him greatly, and which promised to be productive of great good.

Thus incessantly occupied, he contrived to divert his thoughts from the subjects he found so painful. His most forcible reminders of these tabooed topics were Mr. Lindsay's letters, which, heretofore so highly appreciated and so eagerly welcomed, were now received with apprehension and a sinking of heart, and were followed invariably by restless days and sleepless nights.

His uncle's next letter told him of Russell's return to Brantley. "I happened to be there when he arrived," wrote Mr. Lindsay, "for I had been riding over every day, to assist Mrs. Bratton in the management of

the property ; and I never saw anything like the delight of the negroes. They swarmed about him like bees, a dozen of them trying to shake hands with him at once ; and I really thought they were going to carry him into the house upon their shoulders. Poor, simple creatures, they have good reason to rejoice at their deliverance from Bratton's rule.

Russell seemed deeply touched. Indeed, I was surprised at the emotion he exhibited ; for you know he is not demonstrative, on the contrary, self-contained. And no one would have imagined it possible that he could feel any regret for Bratton's well merited fate ; yet, I assure you, his countenance and manner betokened unmistakable distress. When he met his mother, and his eye fell on her sad face and black dress, he turned deadly pale, and for a moment could not speak for emotion. However, this may have been entirely due to sympathy for her, for he is very warmly attached to her."

A little later, this same faithful correspondent wrote :

"You would be amazed to see what an amount of energy the responsibilities of his new position have developed in Russell Thornton. Light and careless and fond of pleasure, as he had seemed, I did not think such a capacity for business was in him. Brantley is assuming an altogether different appearance under his management. Not only is he carrying on the usual farm work in the most thorough and masterly manner, but he is having a quantity of timber cut and hauled to the saw mill. And with this lumber, he is having the barn and other outbuildings repaired, new quarters and inclosures put up, &c. I never saw such an indefatigable worker. He is in his saddle from sun to sun ; and dearly as he loves hunting, he rarely gives a day to the sport. Indeed, he told me yesterday that he had not had a gun in his hand since before he went to Baltimore.

"He frequently spends the evening at Ingleside, and occasionally takes Nora riding or driving in the afternoon ; but his mornings are strictly devoted to business. This intense application to business and the responsibilities of his position, have sobered him a good deal. He is graver than I thought he could be, and looks five years older than when you last saw him. This, I suppose, is quite natural, for the entire charge of such a large estate falling suddenly upon so young a man must be felt as a grave care and heavy responsibility."

Another letter, a few weeks later, stated that having put the plantation in perfect order, Russell was then having the house at Brantley renovated. Workmen were busy repairing, painting and papering the mansion. Some rare and costly shrubbery had been set out on the lawn, and the garden had been terraced and laid off like that at Ingleside.

Further on, came the announcement that Herbert had been constantly looking for and dreaded to see.

"Yesterday," wrote Mrs. Lindsay, "young Thornton formally asked our consent to his marriage with Nora ; and as it seems she had already given him her heart, there was nothing for us to do but to give him her hand.

"Your aunt and myself would have ordered things differently, could we have had our will. It had been the dearest wish of our hearts to see our adopted children united in marriage ; but Nora has decided otherwise, and to her decision we must all bow.

"Since you are not to marry her, there is no one in the world to whom I could more willingly surrender our dear daughter by adoption than to the man of her choice. I have known him from his childhood,

and have always felt for him the deepest interest and the warmest regard. His fine old name and handsome estate, as well as his personal worth, render him a very suitable party for our dear girl. Moreover, this marriage will establish her for life right at our door, as it were, where we can see or hear from her every day in the year.

"Your aunt though, who you know is a great stickler for *blood*, is not wholly reconciled to the marriage. She cannot overlook Mrs. Bratton's family connections; but she knows how sensitive Nora is, and hesitates to wound her by expressing disapprobation of her choice; so I have to bear all of her grumbling and lamentations on the subject. Still, both of the young people have noticed her lack of cordiality to Russell since he appeared in the character of a suiter, and, I think, are deeply pained by it. However, the sympathies of the fairer portion of humanity are so universally enlisted in anything like a marriage, that I am sure by the time Lucy gets fairly under way with the trousseau, she will manifest enough interest to satisfy them both. One thing is certain, she loves Nora too well to deny her anything; and I think she will end by adopting Russell entirely."

Next came the intelligence that the day had been set for the marriage. The interesting event would take place the tenth of May. Russell had urgently pleaded for a much earlier day; but Mrs. Lindsay and Nora insisted that it would be too inconvenient to marry between the seasons, when the trousseau could only be adapted to a few week's wearing, and nothing could be made up in the newest styles. Sustained by such cogent reasoning, the ladies had carried their point, and the impatient bridegroom-elect had to bide their time.

## CHAPTER V.

“For lo! the winter is past; the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.”

The joyous springtime—nature’s glad awakening from the long, cold sleep of dreary winter—the annual miracle of green grass springing from the brown soil; tiny leaflets, fresh and tender, bursting from the dry, bare stems, flowerets, delicate and lovely, unfolding their soft petals in the wooing, violet-tinted rays of the year’s dewy morning—how warmly do we welcome thee! How do our eyes sparkle and our hearts thrill in joyous sympathy with nature’s soft and glad pulsations! With what exhilaration do we breathe the sweet air, odorous with the pure breathings of nature’s swelling, budding, blooming infancy! How eagerly do we bend our ears, wearied with the sound of driving storms and howling winds, to catch the low, glad hum of insect life, the rippling notes of gurgling waters, the bleating of young lambs, the twittering and warbling of busy, happy birds!

This crowning delight of the temperate regions is all unknown to this dwellers in tropical and semi-tropical lands. Where the cruel Frost King never cuts down with his tiny crystal spears all the fair denizens of Flora’s kingdom, nor locks the bare, bleak earth in his icy embrace through dark and dreary months, the glad relief of seeing the harsh monster dethroned is an unknown experience. Where December is crowned with the splendid beauty of the regal camellia, January made odorous with the sweet breath of snowy orange flowers, and February garlanded with jessamine and roses, spring is a matter of indifference, a season which can scarcely claim a marked individuality.

But in Virginia, from three to four months of the year old Boreas reigns supreme; and when the sun does begin to ride high in the heavens, and the days to lengthen, and the air to warm, and the grass to spring, and the buds to swell, it is a time of universal rejoicing.

It was an April day. The morning had been showery, with bursts of sunshine between; but the afternoon was clear and bright, with a dewy freshness in the air. The sombre-hued wintry landscape was faintly tinted with various delicate shades of green by the springing grass, the tender blades of the young wheat, and the tiny leaves fast unfolding from the swelling buds. And around the homesteads, the blended pink and white rifts of peach and cherry blossoms from garden and orchard, formed a garland of beauty.

The gardener at Ingleside had been very busy for weeks past; and the results of his labors were visible in the clean walks, the freshly turned and finely pulverized mould of beds and borders, the neatly trimmed shrubbery and the patches of young green plants springing up on every hand.

Lilacs, yellow jessamine, pyrus japonica, spirea, &c., were blooming profusely, and the borders were gay with violets, hyacinths, narcissus and iris. In the fruit garden, the strawberries, were blooming, the currants, gooseberries, raspberries, and grape vines budding, and the dwarf pears, a mass of blossom. The lower terrace was striped with long, straight green rows of peas, beans, &c., and dotted with hills of cymblins and cucumbers. Flocks of blue birds and tiny, yellow lettuce birds were flitting about the shrubbery, and hopping and pecking over the beds and borders among the young plants. From the tops of the tall trees around, thrushes, catbirds and red birds were calling to each other, and the saucy mockings mimicking them all in notes of entrancing sweetness.

Mrs. Lindsay and Nora had returned the previous evening from Richmond, and they had spent the morning in cutting out and planning the bridal finery they had brought with them. Immediately after dinner they went into the garden. During their short absence, the season had made rapid advances, and they were surprised and pleased to see so much bloom and foliage. Nora went eagerly from bed to border, and from one shrub to another, examining and admiring, comparing its condition this season with that of the last, and speculating upon its further growth and development during the coming summer. Her aunt, scarcely less interested and enthusiastic, followed her everywhere, sharing her admiration of the exquisite freshness and delicacy of the tender leaves and early spring flowers, and reveling with her in the genial sunshine and the sweet, pure air.

Perhaps with some faint shadowings of compunction and regret, the niece said,

"I do not think there can be a lovelier spot on earth than Ingleside in the spring. Certainly, I can never love any other place so well."

"And yet you are going to leave it," said her aunt, in a tone of playful reproach.

"But not far. And I shall come over very often, so often that you will scarcely miss me. I intend to see every flower that blooms in the garden here from March to October."

"Brantley is a finer place than Ingleside," remarked Mrs. Lindsay, "And your uncle says if Russell goes on to improve it as he has commenced, it will be the show place of the county. I dare say you will soon like your new home so well that you will quite forget your old ones."

"No, never, never. I could never forget all the love and kindness I have found here, and the perfect happiness of every day I have passed in your sweet home, dearest aunt. I can never be happier any where, and sometimes, although my future looks so bright, I am almost afraid I shall not be even so happy."

"Oh! I have no doubt you will be very happy with Russell," Mrs. Lindsay said, reassuringly. "He will leave no wish ungratified, and it is plain that he loves you enough to satisfy the most exacting nature."

"Yes indeed, I am fully assured he will do and be all that I could desire. I never had a doubt of him. He has already done a great deal for my pleasure and comfort, for all of which I am sincerely grateful, and especially, I think, for his remodelling the garden at Brantley and making it a *fac simile* of this. It will be a constant reminder of home."

At this moment, a servant came to announce that Mrs. Matthews and her daughter had brought home some sewing and wished to see *them*.

"Mrs. Matthews was a tenant of Mr. Lindsay's and the widow of a former overseer of his father's. For many years he had furnished her with a cottage gratuitously; and he had aided her very materially in bringing up her large family, most of whom were now married and settled in life. She and this daughter lived by themselves, and earned their support chiefly by weaving and sewing. They had been employed to make a large part of Nora's trousseau, and had now brought home some of their finished work.

These two needle-women were characters in their way, and as they were almost the only specimens of their class that Nora ever came in contact with, the quaintness of their very primitive manners and language afforded her considerable entertainment. She was always glad to see them at Ingleside, and on this occasion, sought their presence with a promptness, and greeted them with an effusion which they must have found very gratifying.

The mother was a droll figure, having a very large head, narrow shoulders and a flat meagre form, very rigid and erect. Her features were large and prominent, and a pair of large, intensely bright and staring black eyes combined with the rigidity and erectness of her form to give her an appearance of almost aggressive alertness.

She spoke in a whining voice, with a deliberateness and emphasis which expressed a thorough consciousness of the value of her own opinions and sentiments. It was plain that the beneficent law of compensation, which really equalizes so much that seems unequal in the lot of humanity, had given to her a sufficient amount of self esteem to atone for any deficiencies of birth and fortune.

But the mother was modest and self-distrustful in comparison with the daughter. And in this circumstance, we see a further illustration of the beneficence of the aforesaid law, since fortune had been as niggard, and nature even more cruel to Susan than to her mother.

Miss Susan Matthews was flatter, scrawnier, stiffer and infinitely uglier than her mother, and at the same time as vain of her face and figure as if she had been a veritable Venus. How merciful the Providence, which, in spite of frequent invocations, withholds "the power some gift to gie us, to see ourselves as others see us." Such a gift would have been fatal indeed to Susan.

In weaving and sewing for the gentry, she came in frequent contact with them, going to the best houses to receive orders, and receiving at her own home the wealthy patrons who called to give instructions about their work. In this way, she kept advised of most that went on among the higher class of the community; and as the sayings and doings of their betters possess a wonderful interest for the great mass of humanity, Miss Susan's gossip was eagerly received by the lower orders of society, and gave her a sort of prominence among them which greatly heightened her natural vanity.

Somehow, too, she imbibed the notion that her accidental association with her betters gave her some claim to a social equality with them. So in a small way, she set up to be a fine lady herself. Her voice was carefully modulated to the soft key in which she was accustomed to receive instructions about the making of shirts and petticoats; and she had caught a few Johnsonian words of Latin derivation which underwent some ludicrous transformations in her mouth. Any other indefinable peculiarities she had failed to master, she made up for in ogling and gesticulation.

Mrs. Matthews was very proud of Susan, would listen with admiring attention to her, frequently appeal to her, and quote from her incessantly with a pompous and emphatic, "Susan says she," that Nora found irresistibly comic. Indeed, this merry young lady considered an interview with the mother and daughter "as good as a play"; hence the pleased alacrity with which she responded to the servant's message.

When the greetings were over, Mrs. Matthews displayed her work, saying:

"Well, Miss Nora, we've brought home some more of your wedding finery, and I hope it will suit you. I've almost put out my old eyes a stitchin' of them bands; and I don't think anybody in the world could a done 'em much nicer. Susan begged me to let her do 'em. 'Mother,' says she, 'you're entirely too old to try your eyes so; I can do that stitchin' good enough for anybody.' 'No, Susan,' says I, 'I mean to do this myself. I think so much of Miss Nora that I mean to help make her weddin' clothes, if it's the last work I ever do in this world.'"

"You are very kind," said Nora, "and I am much obliged to you for your interest in me. The work is done beautifully. I think I must make you a present of a new pair of spectacles next Christmas for this."

"But don't give mother all the praise, Miss Nora," said Susan; "just please look at this tucking. Mrs. Tyler, she called at our house the other day to get me to make the doctor some shirts, and she saw me sewing on that skirt. 'Miss Susan,' says she, 'this is the beautifullest tucking I ever saw. The enormity and singularity of the tucks is truly remarkable. You must have a very actuate eye.' 'Mrs. Tyler,' says I, 'I done my very best on them tucks, for I set so much store by Miss Nora that I don't think anything in the world could be too good for her.'"

When the finished sewing had been examined and paid for, and a fresh supply delivered to the seamstresses with full instructions about its execution, as they continued their stay, Mrs. Lindsay and Nora felt called upon to make conversation for their entertainment. As the range of topics was necessarily limited, this task was rather difficult. When the weather, the garden and the poultry had been exhausted, Mrs. Lindsay remarked:

"I hear, Mrs. Matthews, that your neighbor, Mr. Martin, is very sick."

"Yes, poor Tony's very bad off," was the rejoinder.

"Do you know how he is suffering? What his disease is?"

"Well, I did hear, but I disremember. Dr. Minns come to my house the other day to buy some socks for his boys, and I asked him about Tony. He told me his ailment, but 'twas such a curious word it slipped my mind. Susan, what did the doctor say is the matter with Tony Martin?"

At this appeal, Susan cast up her eyes, drew down the corners of her mouth, and said in a tone of tragic despair:

"When you asked the doctor about it, 'Mrs. Matthews,' says he, 'Tony's in a very bad way; the poor fellow's *got a spine on his back.*'"

"A spine on his back!" repeated Nora, not at once comprehending the doctor's diagnosis.

"Yes," said Mrs. Matthews, shaking her head lugubriously, "poor Tony's got a spine on his back."

"But," added Susan cheerfully, "the doctor says he's having it rubbed with cantaridated conundrum, and that the information is considerably induced, which I suppose means that the spine is going away."

"Then, indeed, he is in a bad way!" remarked Nora with emphasis, at the same time giving her aunt a significant glance, which completely upset her gravity. To disguise her amusement, Mrs. Lindsay feigned a fit of coughing, and went to the table for a drink of water.

"You seem to have a bad cold," said Mrs. Matthews; "now if you want to cure it quick, you just take some hoarhound and colt's foot leaves and stew 'em together and make a surrup, and take a tablespoonful three times a day."

As the immediate effect of this prescription was to aggravate the symptoms it was designed to alleviate, Nora asked by way of diversion:

"Are you going to church to-morrow, Miss Susan?"

"Yes, ma'am; I expect to go to Pisgah without fail."

"Is anything of unusual interest going on there to-morrow?"

"Something of unusual interest to me and mother. Hadn't you heard that Thomas Jefferson is going to hold forth at Pisgah to-morrow morning at eleven o'clock?"

Attracted by this subject, Mrs. Matthews ceased to observe Mrs. Lindsay, and gave a proud and pleased attention to the conversation between her daughter and Nora.

"What, your brother, Tom Matthews, do you mean?" asked the latter.

"Yes; he is on a visit to the neighborhood, and Brother Simpson has invited him to preach for him to-morrow. It's to be an all-day meetin', and Thomas will preach both morning and evening."

"I knew Thomas was studying for the ministry, but I had not heard that he was already preaching," said Mrs. Lindsay.

"He's been preaching in Princess Anne county some time, but this is his first sermon here in his own neighborhood," said Susan. "I'm mighty anxious for him to do his best at Pisgah; for people are always harder to please in an acquaintance than a stranger. Mother's mightily flustered about it."

"It is very true," Nora remarked, "that 'a prophet is not without honor save in his own country.' If Tom is going to preach at Pisgah I will go to hear him. I have not forgotten all the huckleberries and chestnuts and young squirrels he used so kindly to send me when I was a little girl. Of course you will go, Mrs. Matthews?"

"I don't know that I can. I would like mightily to hear Thomas preach; but ever since I fell out of the house-door last winter during the sleet and sprained my ankle, I can't walk much. I don't think I could hold out to Pisgah and back."

"We will go by and take you and Susan in the carriage with us," said Mrs. Lindsay. "I should like very much to hear Thomas. He was always a good boy, and I think he deserves great credit for struggling so hard to get an education. He has chosen a noble calling, Mrs. Matthews."

"You have all been very good to Tom," said the proud mother, "Mr. Lindsay especially. Tom said he never could 'a got through without that two hundred dollars your husband gave him. Mr. Herbert, too, helped him a heap with boo's and clothes. I hope the Lord will reward you all. I know no poor widder woman ever had a kinder friend than I've had in William Lindsay. God knows how I would ever have raised my children without his help."

"All that's very true," said Susan, "and nobody thinks any more of Mr. Lindsay than I do; but now that you've got on that subject, if you're let alone, we won't get home before dark. I think we've left the

house by itself long enough. Besides, the hawks are so bad after the chickens that I have to be watching and scaring them off all the time. There's no telling how many they've caught already."

Thus admonished, Mrs. Matthews brought her eulogy of Mr. Lindsay to a close and rose to depart. Scarcely was the leave-taking over, when Russell Thornton drove up in his handsome new carriage (or *barouche* as it was then called), drawn by a beautiful pair of bright bay horses.

As soon as Nora met him, he told her that he had come to ask her and her aunt to drive with him to Brantley. The workmen, he said, were ready to build the summer-house, but he could not decide where to put it. If it was built on the spot first selected, it would obstruct the view from the drawing-room window, and he did not wish that done. As two heads were proverbially better than one, he begged that she would go and help him to choose a site.

Mrs. Lindsay had now become quite reconciled to the marriage of her niece, and being disposed to show Russell's mother every proper attention, was thinking of calling at Brantley in a day or two. She had called to see Mrs. Bratton very soon after her husband's death, before Russell's return from Baltimore; but she had not been since that time, and Mr. Lindsay's reports about the wonderful improvement in the place, had greatly excited her interest and curiosity. The weather was so fine that it seemed a shame to stay indoors. The new carriage, with its soft cushions and heavy-plated mountings, and the beautiful bays tossing their heads and impatiently pawing the turf, looked so inviting that she could not decline. Besides, as the wedding-day was now so near and so well known to all their friends, she could see no impropriety in Nora's going over in her company to spend a few hours with Russell's mother. So she made Russell happy by sending Nora off to prepare for the drive, and then went to her chamber to make some changes in her own toilet.

While awaiting their return, Russell stood leaning against a pillar of the porch, impatiently tapping his boot with the carriage-whip. He was much changed since the bright October afternoon when he had run down the deer below the garden at Ingleside. He was much thinner than then, and the responsibilities, cares and duties of his new position had given to the careless, boyish countenance of that period a gravity and earnestness that had greatly aged him. About the sunny brow and smiling mouth, some unknown agency had graven faint lines that pained and puzzled the skilled physiognomist, though the superficial observer would scarcely have noticed them. These changes, though, had not marred his splendid beauty, only enhanced it, perhaps, by increasing the manliness of his appearance.

As he stood waiting there alone, the smile with which he had seen the ladies depart faded from his countenance, the light died out of his sparkling eyes, and a sombre shadow settled upon the grave, set features. But as soon as Nora appeared in the doorway, there was an instantaneous transformation. Admiration, love, delight, shone from every glowing feature.

She was sweetly and becomingly dressed in a pale blue *berêge*, a hat of white rice straw trimmed with blue, and a lace collar caught together with a coral brooch in which was fastened a cluster of blue and white hyacinths. Her lips were wreathed with smiles, her cheeks glowing with the bloom of youth and health, her eyes sparkling with happiness. There was always in her carriage and manner a sweet simplicity

and dainty grace that enhanced her loveliness. Her face and her dress were so in harmony with the fresh, delicate beauty of earth and sky, that, as she walked away under the budding trees by her lover's side,

"She seemed a part of joyous spring."

Russell handed Mrs. Lindsay into the back part of the carriage, assisted Nora to the front seat, and springing up beside her, gathered up the reins. Tom let go the tossing heads of the high mettled steeds, and they were off like the wind. The new carriage was so softly cushioned and so admirably hung that no jolt nor jar was felt, as the spirited young horses sped fleetly along the winding road. The smile of spring brightened all the landscape, and the air, pure as an infant's breath, was fragrant with the sweet, fresh scents of bursting buds and newly fallowed fields.

It was a proud and happy occasion for Russell. For months, he had been laboring with such eager interest, such assiduous care to make his home fit to receive his lovely, his incomparable bride; and now he was taking her to see these careful and elaborate preparations for her comfort, metaphorically to lay as an offering at her feet this palpable proof of his devotion. He would hear what his ears had thirsted for, her expressions of approbation and appreciation. He would see her at last in the places and amid the scenes which, in the near future, her presence was to adorn and gladden. It was a delightful foretaste of the bliss awaiting him, when, so soon, he should induct her there as the mistress of his home.

The rapid drive soon brought them to their destination. They entered the gate and drove swiftly down the avenue. Double rows of majestic oaks, poplars, beeches and aspens on each side spread their broad, interlacing boughs in a lofty arch above them. At the foot of these the grass was springing fresh and green, and amid their budding boughs the birds were fitting and twittering joyously. At the end of the avenue, arose the sloping green lawn adorned with fine trees and rare shrubs. And crowning this, was the massive, square mansion, whose tall roof had sheltered so many generations of Thorntons.

The house, the offices and inclosures around it, the barn and stables were all newly painted. The negro quarters, with their chicken coops and garden fences—even the pig styes, Nora declared—were all freshly whitewashed, and gleamed snow white amid the surrounding greenery.

The ladies admired the improvements Russell had made, and complimented and congratulated him upon the appearance of his home until he fairly glowed with delight.

In Nora's pure and innocent soul, not one sordid consideration was mingled with the pleasure experienced in contemplating the comfort and beauty of her surroundings. Only, mingled with the pleasure excited by the gratification of her æsthetic nature, was a more intense delight awakened by the conviction that all this expenditure of money and labor was designed to promote her comfort and happiness, a manifestation of the love she prized above every earthly treasure.

But that compound of material elements, mental faculties and moral qualities which went to make up the personality of Mrs. William Lindsay, was strongly leavened with human nature—i. e., the carnal mind against which St. Paul so forcibly declaims. This worthy lady, as she drove down the wide avenue behind the dashing bays, felt an infinite

satisfaction in the thought that the establishment over which her niece was going to preside was so extensive and so elegant, that the name she was about to assume was so aristocratic, and the husband the fates had so early provided her so wealthy and energetic, as well as so handsome and agreeable.

With his Thornton name and connections, his fine estate, and the energy, ambition and enterprise he was developing, she had no doubt that Russell would in a few years be one of the most prominent and influential citizens in the county, a sort of rural magnate whose wife must take precedence of all her neighbors and friends. She could not help reflecting what a signal blessing to all parties had been Bratton's sudden demise, and devoutly thanking the Providence that had so opportunely removed this hideous incubus from the Brantley household.

So entirely was she reconciled to the marriage, so thoroughly did she espouse Russell's cause, that she mentally declared she had never seen Mrs. Bratton look so genteel and ladylike as when she met them this afternoon in her new and costly widow's weeds. And she was, in truth, not very far wrong in this decision; for it is a notable fact that "dress does make a difference." One of the most prominent of Mrs. Bratton's weaknesses was a passion for fine dress and gaudy colors. Ordinarily, her toilet combined such glaring and unharmonious contrasts of vivid colors as must mar the most striking beauty of the wearer and shock the taste of any refined beholder. In mourning, being confined to one hue, and that a sombre one, she was necessarily more tastefully dressed than ever before. Besides, Russell had insisted on ordering from Baltimore a complete and handsome mourning outfit, to be chosen by his cousin, a very fashionable and elegant lady. In these garments, the widow looked more like a lady than she had ever done in her life. And being more at ease at home than abroad, and, withal, genuinely kind and hospitable, she always appeared to greater advantage in her own house than elsewhere.

Mrs. Bratton had always regarded the Lindsay family with the greatest esteem, as well as awe and admiration; for they were almost the only friends of the Thornton family who had ever treated her with civility since she entered it. Mr. Lindsay had known and esteemed old Mr. Thornton too long to throw him over in this old age because of his injudicious marriage. And he had been too much of a gentleman to fail in respect to Mrs. Thornton in her own house. Then, the whole household at Ingleside had been so fond of Russell that they showed his mother some attention for his sake. The grateful woman considered Mrs. Lindsay the most elegant lady in the world, and regarded Nora as the very quintessence of beauty, grace and every form of superiority. That this peerless creature was going to marry her son, was to her a source of the greatest pride and most intense pleasure. She was fully prepared to worship her lovely daughter-in-law; and greeted her this morning with kindness and affection as gratifying to the gentle girl as if her prospective mother-in-law had been a duchess.

On entering the house, they found the interior as much improved by fresh paint and paper as the exterior and the surroundings. The handsome furniture of the first Mrs. Thornton's time had been so carefully preserved by her successor, especially as the falling off of Mr. Thornton's friends had given but little occasion for using it, that it was as good as new. To this, Russell had added some smaller pieces of modern fashion. In the drawing room, Mrs. Lindsay noticed an elegant new

grand piano, some handsome light chairs and a number of beautiful vases, statuettes, &c., that she had never seen before.

At first there was some general conversation about the weather, the crops and gardens, Mrs. Lindsay carefully introducing such topics as she knew to be within the range of her hostess. Then they talked of the recent improvements at Brantley, and delighted the fond mother by extolling her son's energy and taste.

Soon, though, the conversation split into dialogues; the two elderly ladies discussed domestic matters, and the lovers talked about a concert Nora had attended while in Richmond, and a new novel she had brought home with her. Then Russell led her to the new piano, and throwing it open, begged that she would try its tone. When she had played a new and very popular waltz, and had expressed herself as delighted with the instrument, he asked her to sing something, supplementing this request with the remark,

"I have wished so much to hear it with your voice."

She ran her fingers over the keys, beginning two or three preludes, but failing to recall the accompaniment.

"I have such a poor memory for accompaniments," she said, "that I can play very few of my songs without the notes. Let me see, this is very simple; I think I can manage it. And after playing a short prelude, she sang that well known song of Moore's:

"Come rest in this bosom, my own stricken deer;  
Though the herd have fled from thee, thy place still is here;  
Here still is the smile that no cloud can o'ercast,  
And the heart and the hand are thine own to the last.

"Thou hast called me thine angel in moments of bliss;  
And thine angel I'll be through the horrors of this,  
Through the furnace unshrinking thy steps to pursue,  
And shield thee and save thee or perish there too.

"Oh! what was love made for if 'tis not the same  
Through joy and through torment, through glory and shame?  
I know not, I ask not, if guilt's in that heart,  
I know that I love thee whatever thou art."

Russell was standing a little behind her, bending fondly over her shoulder. It would be impossible to describe the change that came over him while she sang—how the light faded from his eye, the color from his cheek, the smile from his lips—the change from bliss to anguish, the suppressed tremor that nearly shook his stalwart frame. As she sang the last words, she looked up smiling into his face; and at the sight of the livid cheek, the stony eye, the corrugated brow, the painfully compressed lips, she started visibly.

Seeing this, he made a strong effort to recover his self-command, and, summoning a smile, said in his usual tone,

"Thank you, that was very sweet. Now can't you sing Annie Laurie?"

"No," she replied, "not without the music. And I don't wish to sing any more. It seems to pain you. You don't like that song."

"You are mistaken," he said. "It is a pretty tune, and I admire the poetry, that is the sentiment it expresses, extremely. That is an admirable definition of true love—'the same through joy and through torment, through glory and shame.' Do you think your love could stand that test, Nora?"

Despite the gayety of his tone and the smile on his lips, there was a feverish light, a look of earnest questioning in his eye, which puzzled her.

"I don't know," she answered slowly, as if pondering the question. "My love could stand any amount of trial and misfortune; but I do not see how any right minded, pure hearted person could love one morally unworthy, one who has '*guilt in his heart.*'"

At this moment, Mrs. Lindsay approached the piano and said,

"Nora, Mrs. Branton wishes to hear that pretty variation of 'Home, Sweet Home' that you played for her last summer."

Then to Russell she said, "You have a delightful instrument here. Did you select it yourself?"

"Not entirely," he replied; "my cousin, Mrs. Dashiell, of Baltimore, assisted me in choosing it."

As soon as Nora had played the piece desired, they went out into the garden. The matrons strolled into the kitchen garden to examine the young vegetables and compare their advancement with those at Ingle-side. Russell and Nora promenaded the walks of the flower garden, planning what shrubs and flowers should be planted on the various beds and borders. After much discussion, they agreed upon the site for the summer house. Then, sitting down on the stone steps of the upper terrace, they drew a design for some rustic seats. When this was finished, Nora consulted her watch and said it was time for them to think of returning home.

"Oh! not yet; it is early," said Russell. Then in a tone of real distress, he added, "You can't think how I hate to see you leave. I feel as Adam might have done if Eve had gone out of Paradise and left him all alone. If you had only listened to my pleadings, you would have become already established here, and there would be no more of these sad partings for me."

"You unreasonable creature, haven't I dozens of times explained to you with the most irresistible logic and eloquence why it was not convenient for me to marry you sooner?"

"Yes, a pack of nonsense about a lot of trumpery finery, that is of no consequence at all. All the dress in the world couldn't make you more lovely than you are; and you know I would be glad enough to get you with but a single calico dress in your wardrobe."

"So you have frequently said; and I dare say you even think it. Nevertheless, I believe you would not like me to appear and act differently from others. Besides, there is no need for such frantic haste about our nuptials. We are both young enough to wait several years, much less several months."

"For heaven's sake, don't talk that way. Don't hint at the possibility of any longer waiting. You girls, for all your boasted tenderness, are the cruelest creatures alive. You have no feeling at all for a man. When you get your rosy fingers among his heartstrings, you twist them most remorselessly."

"Now how can you say that? When did I ever do or say anything to pain you?"

"Never, except to persist in deferring our marriage, which has caused me more misery than you can imagine."

"But why should a little necessary delay make you miserable? We see each other almost daily; and you know perfectly well that I am true to you in every thought and feeling, and that very soon I shall be yours entirely."

"Ah! that is it, going to be mine, but not actually my own. It is the longing to have you here in my home close to my heart, and the fear, which from the first has haunted me, that something might come between us to part us—it is this wild longing, and haunting fear that makes me so restless and impatient."

"The fear that something might part us!" repeated Nora in amazement. "Dear Russell, how wildly you talk! *What could part us?*"

"Oh! I don't know—it's just a silly fear, born of my excessive, maddening love, I suppose. But Nora, you know we haven't had plain sailing altogether in the course of our true love. Your Aunt Lucy has never favored my suit. Her preference was for Herbert."

"What of that, since it was not Aunt Lucy's preference, but mine, that had to be consulted in this case?"

"Yes, I am thankful for that, and doubly thankful for your preference. But, to tell the truth, much as I commend it, I do sometimes wonder at your preference. And at times I am even a little bit troubled by the fear that you have made a mistake. There is so much in common between you and Herbert—your literary tastes, your love of nature, your philanthropic aspirations, &c., that I feel almost afraid sometimes lest in the long run you might not find me altogether so congenial as he would have been. And Bertie is so singularly pure and noble that it seems to me he is the only man in the world good enough for you."

This was a strange avowal from a lover anxious to occupy the first place in the affections and esteem of his betrothed. Such a eulogy of his most formidable rival, would have been ill-advised indeed if he had not known how perfectly secure his position was. As it was, it only heightened her opinion of his humility and generosity—she would have loved him even more for this confession had it been possible.

"Well," she said, smiling archly, "since your conscience troubles you so about your own demerits, suppose you write to Herbert that, having become convinced of your own unworthiness and being assured of his superior worth and qualifications, you forthwith resign me to him. Perhaps it is not too late to make the transfer."

"Now don't mock me," he said pitifully. "I only meant that Bertie is so much better than I."

"Yes, Herbert is very good. But I know a *better*—certainly a *dearer one*. No one could ever make me happier than I am with you, dear Russell, or by any possibility so happy. You hold my heart, my happiness, my life, absolutely and entirely in your hands," she said, looking fondly into his eyes and placing both of her hands in his.

"A precious trust," he said, raising her hands to his lips. "And you shall see how fondly and faithfully I will guard it. Is there anything more than I have done that I could do to please you? Is there anything in me or about me, dearest, that you would wish otherwise?"

"There is but one thing in the world that troubles me," she replied—"the fear that you are not entirely happy, that there is some trouble you are keeping from me. For sometimes, as just now when I had been singing, I see on your face such a strange expression, such a wild, desperate, hunted look, that it frightens me."

A flower that he had been carelessly twirling around between his fingers dropped, and he stooped to pick it up. He was sometime recovering it. When he had done so, he answered with averted face,

"Didn't I explain that by mentioning the foolish fear that haunts me, the dread of something preventing our marriage?"

"But why should you be troubled by such an absurd fancy? Oh! I know, she said, a light seeming to dawn upon her sadly perplexed mind. You have worked so hard that you are breaking down, your nervous system is giving way. Uncle William said that one who had lived such a life of leisure and pleasure as yours had been, could not stand such incessant occupation. He has often told me that you were overdoing the thing. And he spoke advisedly. You ask me if there is anything about you I wished changed. Yes, I wish you to take an absolute rest from this time to the 10th of May, our wedding day. I am glad the time for me to take you in hand is so near, that I may prevent your killing yourself entirely. On your account, I wish it were to-morrow."

"You cannot wish it half so ardently as I do; for I am only happy in your presence. There is no danger of my hurting myself with work when I get you to Brantley. I am afraid I shall not be able to leave you long enough to attend to anything. Instead of complaining of my excessive industry, I am afraid Mr. Lindsay will feel constrained to chide me for my indolence."

It was quite dark when they reached Ingleside. Russell remained to tea. When he was leaving, he said to Nora,

"I suppose you are going to St. Mark's to-morrow?"

"No," she said, Tom "Matthews is going to preach at Pisgah to-morrow, and we have promised to go and take his mother and sister to hear him."

"Then I'll go there myself. And I have no doubt mother would like to go too; for she is a good friend of Mrs. Matthews and helped to educate Tom. I thought myself that her appropriations in that quarter were very much misapplied; for I never could discover any particular ability in Thomas Jefferson. It's my opinion that the young man has fallen into the very common error of mistaking ambition for genius. However, as 'the proof of the pudding is in the eating,' we'll know more about Tom's talents this time to-morrow. I dare say we can stand one discourse from him; but I shouldn't like to have to sit regularly under his ministrations."

The announcement that Tom Matthews would preach at Pisgah Sunday had excited the liveliest interest among the congregation, they having known him as a poor boy, who had performed the coarsest labor to support himself and assist in the maintenance of his mother's family. His having, by gaining an education under difficulties, risen from this humble position to be a spiritual teacher and guide, caused them to regard him as something of a phenomenon. If they had read enough to know how large a proportion of the great men of the world have risen from the humblest orders of society, the modest elevation of their quondam neighbor would not have impressed them so forcibly. But as the family library of the most enlightened members of Pisgah congregation consisted of the Bible and Richardson's Almanac, these happy souls were under the impression that, in the daring achievement of climbing the rounds of fortune's ladder by dint of personal ambition and effort, Tom was a pioneer—hence their excessive wonder and admiration. As it was, they were preparing to flock *en masse* to see this child of the people who had mounted from the plow to the pulpit, and to hear such words of wisdom as might fall from his lips. All around the neighborhood, there was a great brushing and darning of Sunday coats, and a great starching and ironing of white shirts and calico dresses on this particular Saturday afternoon.

Nowhere was the overhauling and renovation of the family wardrobe more active than in the cabin of Mrs. Nancy Jenkins, who claimed to be a fourth cousin of the Matthewes, though Miss Susan fiercely repudiated the connection. And that she should have done so is not strange; for a more thriftless and worthless family than the Jenkinses, it would have been hard to find.

The Jenkins residence, which stood in the corner of an old field, near a pine wood, was a log cabin of a single room, with a loft above, and at one end a chimney nearly as large as the house itself, constructed of logs and sticks daubed with mud. In front of this, was a small garden, inclosed with upright boards and palings, no two of which were of the same width and height. Three sides of this model fence was inclining to an angle of thirty degrees, and only kept from falling prone by props of unskinned pine poles. On one side of the garden stood a tiny log hen-house, having a flat top covered with earth, upon which the fresh herbage was springing up between the brown stalks of the last year's crop of weeds. And close beside this, was a triangular pig-pen, in which a lean, woolly, sorrel pig, with a large head and a long sharp nose, was running around, squealing as if in the last agonies of famine; while a starved mongrel dog, half cur and half terrier, stood remorselessly licking the wooden trough. A very wide-awake red rooster and half a dozen matronly hens were industriously scratching up and eagerly devouring the small crop of English peas just beginning to sprout in the garden. On the doorstep, in the sun, lay a gaunt, low-spirited looking hound; and crouched in a corner of the wide clay hearth, were too little, dingy, yellow dogs of a species denominated in that section "bench-leg fice."

The principal furniture of the cabin was a large, high bed, covered with a faded and dilapidated patchwork quilt. This latter made after a pattern known as the "rising sun" was the *chef d'œuvre* of Mrs. Jenkins's girlhood's leisure, and had once been a gorgeous affair, notwithstanding its present sorry appearance. In one corner of the room was a small corner-cupboard, bearing on its sides some relics of blue paint and in its sash door some remnant of greenish window glass. Arranged upon the shelves of this receptacle, was a motley collection of cups, saucers, plates and bowls in various states of mutilation, the crowning glory of the lot being a tall, wide-mouthed pitcher, old enough and ugly enough to bring its weight in gold in the present aesthetic era. A wooden water bucket stood on the shelf by the door, and a long handled gourd hung on a nail beside it. The cooking utensils, consisting of a dinner-pot, oven, frying pan, or spider and a teakettle, were piled away in one corner of the wide fireplace; and on a shelf above the hearth, were a tray, sifter, (or sieve), a rusty tin coffee-pot and a wooden coffee mortar.

Mrs. Jenkins, a gaunt, sallow matron, with black eyes, and rusty, tangled black hair that emphatically disclaimed any acquaintance with a comb, wore a striped cotton dress so faded and soiled that only on a square foot of it at the back, just below the waist, was it possible to trace the original blue color. A large-flowered cotton handkerchief around her neck, a scrap of greasy apron, a ragged slipper on one broad flat foot, and on the other the foot of a man's boot, from which the leg had been cut away, completed her costume. She sat before the door to get the light—for the cabin had but one small window of four panes—and was industriously patching a badly worn frock-coat of blue Kentucky jeans.

Her eldest daughter, Lisa Jane, the very counterpart of her mother, except that she was twenty years younger, and whose dress was precisely that of her parent, minus the handkerchief and shoes, was ironing away for dear life on a bright red calico dress, while various other damp garments lay rolled together in a chair. The second girl, rather smaller than her sister, more ragged and very much more dirty, was sitting in the door, trying to repair an old, brown wool hat, by sewing, with a coarse white cotton thread, a scrap of bright blue cloth into a large hole in the crown.

A boy about twelve years old, who scarcely wore anything at all but the yoke of a shirt and the waistband of a pair of breeches, was seated in the middle of the floor, with a rusty hammer and some tacks, trying to repair an old shoe. Two younger children, so covered with dirt that but for their straight hair no one would ever have thought of identifying them as specimens of the Caucasian race, and whose single garment was a cotton dress tore off in a fringe up to their knees in front and dragging at their heels behind, were busily picking up sticks and chips to keep the fire alight for the ironing.

"There now," said Mrs. Jenkins, biting off the thread from the patch she had just finished sewing on the elbow of the coat, "I have fixed up Sam's coat most as good as new; and when Lisa Jane's done ironing his shirt and breeches, he'd be rigged out tip-top to go to Pisgah to-morrow, if he jest had a good hat."

"I'm a fixin' of a hat, nice as ken be," said the girl in the doorway, proudly displaying her handiwork.

"Lor! Peggy Ann," exclaimed her sister, "you don't 'spose Sam's a gwine to wear that hat to church, with all them white stitches a grin'n' on the top. Why, it's enough to skeer the crows."

"An' that's my hat, too," said the boy; "and Sam shan't wear it no sich a thing; for I'se gwine to Pisgah myself."

"What you thinkin' 'bout, Andrew Jackson?" inquired Peggy Ann. "How ken you go when you ain't got a thing in the world fitten to wear to church?"

"Never you mind 'bout that; I'se gwine all the same."

"No you ain't," said Lisa Jane very emphatically. "You'd better b'lieve I ain't a going to have no such a ragamuffin taggin' at my heels to-morrow, and I dressed up in my best bib and tucker. Sam and me's all that's goin' from this house. And Sam must try and borry a hat from Ned Perkins; for I can't be seen along of that thar hat at Pisgah, and my own cousin, Thomas Jefferson Matthews, in the pulpit a preachin'."

At this moment Sam appeared on the scene. The boy sprang up to meet him, the two younger children rushed in behind him, the melancholy hound arose and wagged his tail, and the girls' eyes sparkled; for, welcome sight, hanging from the gun slung over his shoulder were a long string of fish and three or four wild ducks.

"What's all that row about a hat?" he asked. Whereupon Peggy Ann displayed her hat, Andrew Jackson asserted his claim, and Lisa Jane uttered her protest all at once.

"Well, you may all stop your clamor; for I ain't beholden to any of you for a hat," said Sam loftily, drawing out from the tail-pocket of his coat a very decent looking black felt hat. "Providence has jest provided me with one in a most ornexpected manner."

"Lor! 'tis a nice one. Whar in the world did you git it, Sam?"

"I found it in the mash (marsh) when I went in affter these ducks.

It was hangin' on a bush, not so far from the river bank. I 'spose some sailor dropped it during the freset, and it floated out and lit thar. You can see it's been in the water, but it's dry enough now, and very little hurt from bein' in the river. Anyway, it's a heap better 'an my old one."

"Yes, indeed," said Peggy Ann, who was admiringly inspecting the treasure trove. "But here's a hole in it, a little round hole right through the band and all. I'll patch it for you, Sam," officiously brandishing the darning-needle with the white cord dangling from it.

"No, I thank you," replied Sam. "I think your patch would be a heap more cornspicuous than the hole."

"And here's a name in it," said Lisa Jane, "a name wrote on a scrap of white linen and sewed on to the linin'. Maybe mother ken tell us whose 'tis."

"No," said Mrs. Jenkins, after examining it, "I can't make it out. It's writin', and I can't read nothin' but printed letters. But hand me the scissors, Peggy, and I'll rip it out."

"No, let it alone," said Sam; "it's a good mark for me to tell it by. It might git mixed up with the other hats at church. Besides, if it does belong to anybody about here, and they should come across it in my hands, they might think by my rippin' out the name that I was sorter stealin' the hat. Let it stay like 'tis."

Not far from the spot where Herbert had heard a boat rowed ashore on that dismal evening when he had witnessed the burial in the cedar thicket, there was on this particular Saturday night a great stir and movement. Jim Darby, who owned a little farm higher up the creek, was engaged in putting down a hedge for the purpose of fishing. This hedge was to be constructed by driving a long row of stakes across the bed of the creek and weaving oak and hickory brush in and out among them. In the middle, a passage-way was left, and behind this a seine was to be set to entangle such of the finny tribe as might be going up the stream for the purpose of spawning. Darby had selected Saturday night for this undertaking, because it required more hands than he was able to hire, and by doing it at this time he could get the assistance of as many negroes as he wished, simply by furnishing them a jug of whiskey and promising them the use of his hedge and boat. Saturday night was the negro's favorite time for dances, prayer-meetings, coon-hunting, corn-shucking and hedge-building, because the Sunday following afforded him the opportunity to rest and make up his lost sleep.

Neither the Brantley nor Ingleside negroes took any part in hedge-building, because the masters of those estates had their seines hauled daily during the fishing-season, and supplied the whole population of their plantation abundantly with fish. Also, Jim Darby was in very bad odor with them, because he had been an intimate friend of David Bratton's, as well as the ring-leader in organizing and conducting bands of patrollers, whose operations were excessively distasteful to the colored gentry. Therefore, the Thornton and Lindsay negroes were not represented in his troop.

Darby and Bratton had indeed been very intimate friends, although the former was somewhat the junior of the latter. During their bachelorhood, they had been in the habit of visiting the girls together, and of attending weddings, quiltings and protracted meetings in company, when Bratton would lend his friend one of Mrs. Thornton's mules to ride. After Bratton's marriage, he had advanced money for Darby to buy a little

farm adjoining Brantley, and had helped him to stock it. He had also let him have as a cook a negro girl of his wife's, for her "victuals and clothes," and had pretended to hire him a negro man, though no one believed that Darby ever paid anything for the negro's services. Besides this, hands from Brantley were regularly sent in the spring to build Darby's fences, in the summer to reap his wheat, and in the winter to cut his wood. It was not strange that Darby should have valued Bratton's friendship, and lamented his death more deeply than any other human being had done.

During Bratton's life they visited each other intimately; and it had been one of Russell's greatest trials seeing this man admitted freely and frequently to his mother's table. For, besides being ignorant and vulgar, he was one of the vainest, most impudent and dogmatic creatures in existence—one of those irresistible human nuisances who, having neither sense nor sensibility, are perfectly unassailable and unabatable. Full of self-importance, and delighting in authority, Darby was in his element to-night, ordering and directing what he considered an important enterprise. Indeed, it is a most desirable thing, the habit and power of command, a most comfortable condition to "say to this man go, and he goeth, and to another come, and he cometh." Especially is this so when, as in Darby's case, one has during most of his life himself been going and coming at the bidding of others.

The negroes, who notwithstanding their ignorance gauged Darby mentally, morally and socially with perfect accuracy, and who felt the most profound contempt for "poor white folks" generally, were not altogether tractable on this occasion. In the first place, there was a very spirited discussion about the site of the hedge, Darby wishing to place it higher up the stream than any had ever been "planted" before. The negroes insisted that so far up there would be a poor run of fish, and Darby declared that lower down it would be washed away by high water before the fishing season was half over, as had invariably been the case heretofore. Finally, especially after passing the jug around, he carried his point, and they set to work in earnest.

A huge fire of pine knots was built upon each side of the creek, and the negroes in little squads, were cutting and carrying poles and brush to the water's edge. Darby was busy directing and superintending them, at the same time presiding at the jug, occasionally distributing its contents, and more frequently imbibing himself. Then, when the materials were prepared, they commenced driving down the stakes across the creek. Near the middle of the stream, they found some obstruction at the bottom, through which the point of the stake would not pass.

"It's a log that has settled there," said Darby. "Moses Christian, you are a good swimmer, and the water's not very deep, dive to the bottom and get these hooks under it, so that we can pull it one side, and I'll give you a quart of whisky to carry home."

The offered reward was considered a sufficient incentive to a far more perilous enterprise, and Moses dived at once. When he came up, he reported that it was not a log, but a boat at the bottom of the creek.

"So much the better," said Darby, "if it's a good one. Let's haul it out and see." Whereupon, they set to work, raised the boat, and dragged it up on the bank.

No sooner did Darby set eyes on it than he exclaimed, "It's poor Davy's boat, I'd a knowed it anywhere; and besides, here's his name on it, David Bratton, that I cut here the very day 'twas finished. Poor

fellow, and he's gone. But how did his boat git into Tapsico Creek? He started to Oak Hill down the river; what could he 'a been doing up here? Here boys, take these two buckets and dip me enough water to wash the mud out of the bottom of this boat; I want to see what sunk it."

As soon as this was done, he clapped his hands upon his sides, exclaiming, "Didn't I always say so? Yes, I knowed it! I told 'em all David Bratton never come to his death by accident. I wonder what accident bored these holes in the bottom of this boat. You see boys it's as plain as daylight this boat has been scuttled. Now David Bratton never scuttled it. Who did? Yes, who did? That's what I mean to find out. And the one that done it shall swing as sure as"—.

Although much excited at the discovery of the boat, Darby did not think it expedient to suspend work upon the hedge, as the fishing season was already considerably advanced and the fish were running finely during the present warm spell. It was midnight when the hedge was finished; and then the party were too tired and too drunk to do more than to drag themselves home and tumble into bed. Their slumbers were prolonged till a late hour the next morning; hence the news of Bratton's boat having been discovered did not begin to circulate before the middle of the day.

## CHAPTER VI.

Pisgah church stood some miles back from the river, in a rather sterile region of country known as "the ridge," being the divide between the valleys of Chickahominy and the James. Its congregation, consisting of the oversers of the river plantations and the small farmers of the immediate vicinity, were mostly non-slave-holders.

The exterior of the square, unpainted wooden building, with its sharp, high roof and few small windows, looked more like a barn than a church. Nor was the interior better finished or more ornamented than the exterior. The walls and ceiling had been covered with a single coating of plastering, so rudely put on that the strokes of the trowel, traceable in an infinity of confused angles and curves, somewhat resembled an uncouth, very low *bas relief*. The benches of unpainted pine were so hard, high and narrow that in sitting on them through the Sunday's services one did penance for the sins of the whole week. The pulpit, a narrow box, approached by a steep flight of steps on each side, was perched so high that the minister's head nearly touched the ceiling, and the worshippers who persisted in looking at him through the sermon, especially if it was a long one, invariably went home with a "crick in the neck."

In such a community as that surrounding Pisgah, the church is a social as well as a religious institution. Throughout the year, going to church is their only recreation; and the annual "big meetings" which are held every summer after the crops are laid by, take the place with them of the fairs and festivals that divert and recreate the populace of European countries. The basket dinners on such occasions afford a tempting opportunity for the display of good housewifery and the exercise of hospitality; and the recess between the sermons presents a far too tempting occasion for gossip and flirtation. Hence, these protracted religious services too often degenerate into a social frolic, to the great distress and disapprobation of the truly devout.

On the present occasion, it was a source of infinite satisfaction to Mrs. Matthews and Susan, who were among the humblest of the Pisgah congregation, to find themselves objects of general interest and attention as near relatives of the preacher. And their gratification on the occasion was no little enhanced by driving up to the church in the Ingleside carriage, and making their entry with Mrs. Lindsay and Nora. Very gratifying it was, too, to see the women craning their necks to get a view of the party and pushing each other and crowding together to make room for such distinguished personages. And it was flattering in the highest degree to receive the marked attention of Brother Brown, the moneyed man of the congregation and main pillar of the church, who hurriedly advanced to meet them and escort them to the very highest seat in the synagogue.

This distinction, though, Mrs. Lindsay respectfully declined. On a former visit to Pisgah, she had inadvertently accepted this civility at Mr. Brown's hands; but the noisy responses from that quarter, the spirited vocal performance, and the loud shouting of certain sisters who were wont thus to display their superior zeal and piety, rendered what Tom Harrison styled the "amen corner," such an undesirable locality for a person liable to nervous headache that she had ever after given it a wide berth.

The Pisgah congregation possessed a lively interest for Nora. The striking countenances of these primitive rustics, rudely chiseled by the rough strokes of natural passion without any of the graceful finish and fine toning of education and culture, afforded her an entertaining study. The incongruity of the various costumes, some quaint in their unpretending antiquity, others grotesque in their crude imitation of the prevailing mode, excited some amusement in her present merry and thoughtless mood. And still more ludicrous did she find the striking contrast between the countenances and demeanor of the giddy young girls tittering and whispering together in the rear of the church, and the grave and dignified matrons sitting erect and motionless in the vicinity of the pulpit, looking straight before them, with an expression of severe sanctity and devout misery.

On a pine table, in front of the pulpit, stood a large cedar bucket of water, from which projected the handle of a gourd; and beside these lay a keen hickory switch. Occasionally a stout and awkward matron would lead one or more chubby, round faced, wide eyed children, looking so proud though uneasy in their queer Sunday clothes, all the way up the aisle to the table for water. And at short intervals, an adventurous dog would straggle in and commence an exploring tour, whereupon one of the brethren would seize the rod of correction and fiercely scourge the daring intruder, the howling animal darting from side to side in a frantic attempt to find shelter under the benches. Notwithstanding the frequency of this performance, each repetition excited uncontrollable merriment among the fair young worldlings, which in its turn provoked in the elderly saints a severe condemnation, manifested in the exchange of indignant glances among themselves and the bending of lowering countenances upon the thoughtless transgressors.

Soon after the arrival of Mrs. Lindsay and her party, Mrs. Bratton and her son entered the church; but as soon as Russell had seen his mother seated, he returned to the church yard, to join in the animated discussion of politics and the crops going on there.

While awaiting the arrival of the minister, the portion of the congregation in the church engaged in singing. This was a favorite part of the worship at Pisgah, and the congregation engaged in it with a heartiness and abandon which seemed to imply a thorough belief in its special acceptance and efficacy.

Brother Adkins, whose nasal droning had been compared by a wag of the neighborhood to the "noise of a bee in a blossom," "struck the tune" and in doing so crushed it beyond the recognition of the composer. Close upon his opening notes, followed Brother Edson, whose vocal performance had been likened by the same facetious critic to "the sawing of gourds." Sister Brown, the volume of whose voice was as great in comparison with her size as that of the nightingale, but whose notes were infinitely inferior in softness and melody to those of a peacock, soon took the tune away from Brother Adkins and finished off the

third line of the first stanza just as he was ending the second, the rest of the congregation straggling along between. A stranger brought blind-fold upon the scene would have been astonished indeed to find that the object of all this uproar was *music*. But the delighted performers were thoroughly satisfied that they were accomplishing that object in a masterly manner.

Brother Brown, after a deliberate adjustment of his spectacles and a wearisome search through the book for the hymn, which Brother Adkins had struck without any announcement of the page, had stepped on tiptoe all across the church with the open hymn book to offer it to Nora; but the Pisgah music being utterly beyond her abilities, she had to decline the civility.

Presently there was a stretching of necks towards the doors and windows, a subdued whispering, a significant nodding and nudging, which indicated the arrival of the preacher. Then came a breathless hush of attention and expectation, as Tom Matthews, looking severely clerical in a long black coat, a tall, stiff, black hat and a broad white cravat, entered the church.

Tom was a rather queer figure, having inherited his mother's erectness and rigidity of form, as well as her large head and staring black eyes. With his hat in one hand and a large cotton umbrella and a pair of roomy but flabby saddle-bags in the other, with the long, swift stride acquired in stepping off corn rows, he advanced to the pulpit, followed by scores of keenly observant, eager and expectant eyes.

Just as Tom stepped across the threshold, the congregation "struck" another hymn, nearly an octave too high, and dragging the last syllable of each word into the first of the next, embellished it with various slurs not to be found in the note book. A moment later, the men from the yard came tramping in, the clatter of fifty pairs of No. 8 brogans nearly drowning the shrill piping of more than twice the number of female voices.

When every soul of these had squeezed into a seat, and all were expectantly waiting for the preacher, who hidden in the high pulpit was engaged in private devotion, to show his head above the sacred desk, there appeared in the doorway appropriated to the gentlemen the well oiled black head, the broad red face, and the square, compact figure of Jim Darby, the latter gorgeously arrayed in a pair of green and yellow striped pantaloons, a plum colored coat and a flaming cravat.

Darby had long been a member of Pisgah, though his piety was of an intermittent character, breaking out spasmodically at "big meetings" and quietly subsiding during the intervening periods. When he had been, as he expressed it, "a young buck, sparking the girls," he had been a regular attendant; and now that he had lost his wife, he was renewing his attendance, prospecting for matrimony among the widows and spinsters of the congregation.

With his habitual pompous strut and impudent swagger, he advanced to the front bench and dropped upon his knees almost in the laps of Brothers Brown, Edson and Adkins. At this Pharisaical display of piety on the part of Jim Darby, Russell Thornton, who possessed a keen sense of the ludicrous combined with a slender stock of reverence, could not suppress a smile; and some irreverent youths in a remote part of the house indulged in a broad grin.

In the meantime, the preacher arose, looked slowly around upon the assembled congregation, deliberately drew out a large, stiff, white hand-

kerchief from his pocket, carefully wiped his face, then as carefully refolded and replaced it. Then, after another deliberate survey of the audience, he proceeded to read the morning lesson, while the congregation leaned forward with wide open eyes and parted lips, absorbed with wonder and admiration in beholding Tom Matthews, one of themselves, read the Scriptures so glibly with such a scholarly tone and accent.

The attention of a majority of them was, however, soon diverted by yet another arrival. Heated, hurried, and evidently frightened at having to run the gauntlet of so many curious eyes, Sam Jenkins and Lisa Jane strode down the aisle, the latter looking very gay indeed in her "best bib and tucker."

The house was already full to overflowing, the people being packed into the narrow seats "like herrings in a barrel," to use a favorite simile of the locality. For some moments these late comers found their eager and anxious quest of a seat quite vain.

However, some of Lisa Jane's friends were accommodating enough to crowd together and leave bare a few inches on the end of a bench, upon which she dropped precipitately.

Sam was by no means so lucky. Looking very red and sheepish, he passed down the whole side of the house occupied by the men, making several frantic attempts to squeeze in between the benches, but being every time repulsed by the unyielding barrier of knees opposed to his entrance. At last, spying a few inches of space immediately in the rear of Jim Darby, in sheer desperation he rushed for it, and forcibly wedged himself in between two indignant but helpless brethren. With a grin of triumph, he glanced around him, then proceeded to fan his flushed face awhile with his hat before depositing it on the floor between his feet.

As there was no stenographer present, it would be impossible to reproduce the sermon, even if this were desirable. Suffice it to say, that Tom was at that period of life when a man is most confident of his exceptional abilities and best satisfied with his erudition; consequently, he could precisely explain various questions in theodicy which men of world-renowned abilities and learning, after long years of profound thought and diligent study, have admitted to be beyond their comprehension.

Fresh from his theological studies, he was, of course, bristling with polemic divinity; and he had constructed a very elaborate and ingenious argument to prove a number of things that not a soul present had ever in his life dreamed for one moment of questioning. The few intelligent persons in the audience found the discourse dry, dull and tiresome in the extreme. To the large unlearned majority, it was simply unintelligible, and therefore regarded by them as very profound.

"Mighty deep! mighty deep!" Brother Adkins whispered behind his hand to Brother Brown, at the same time digging his elbow into the ribs of the latter to give emphasis to the conviction. "Powerful learned!" was the reply of the brother, accompanied by a responsive nudge.

Finally, when the learned young brother had explained all about the Trinity, satisfactorily (to himself at least) interpreted the Apocalypse, and cleared up other trifling theological difficulties, the discourse came to an end.

Then every man, woman and child, totally regardless of the gifts of nature and the requirements of art, joined in singing a hymn. Brother Brown then led in prayer, storming the very gates of heaven with his stentorian tones, while groans and responses from various quarters indorsed his petitions.

And Jim Darby, down on his knees, his broad, flat back bent forward at an angle of ninety degrees, his big feet set up square on the toes, displaying a vast expanse of well worn sole leather, and his sharp little black eyes shut fast, was playing the devout with all his might.

But in spite of his proximity to Brothers Brown and Adkins and his conspicuous position generally, he was compelled to interrupt his devotions to relieve himself of the immense quid which distended his cheeks and the streams of tobacco juice that were forcing an egress at the corners of his wide mouth. So, squeezing his head under the narrow board, which, held in place by upright supports, formed the back of the bench, he considerably looked about him to avoid spitting on the feet of his neighbors. When lo! immediately under his eyes, he saw a hat setting on the crown, and bearing on the inside, in the large, stiff hand-writing so familiar to him, the name of *David Bratton*. Startled out of all sense of propriety, he uttered an ejaculation, which luckily he had the presence of mind to turn into a groan, thus very appropriately giving expression to his emotion and at the same time appearing to be strongly moved by religious fervor—the clever feat of “killing two birds with one stone.”

Of course Darby heard but little of the prayer after this discovery. He examined the hat minutely, and satisfied himself that it was the very one he had seen Bratton wearing the morning of the day on which he had disappeared. He saw, too, that it bore the evidence of having lain awhile under water. Then he looked with all his might at Sam Jenkins, who was sitting behind him with the hat between his feet. But nothing could be learned from the contemplation of the unkempt, sandy locks covering the knotty cranium of Sam, his face being devoutly buried in the folds of a big red and yellow cotton handkerchief.

After the prayer, the whole congregation stood up and sang “The Old Ship of Zion.” Although this was Darby’s favorite tune, and he would have ridden ten miles any time for the pleasure of showing off his vocal powers in it, he could not sing for watching the apparent owner of Bratton’s hat. One of the brethren had offered to let Sam sing off his book; and although the youth knew the whole hymn by heart, and did not know a single letter of the alphabet, he kept his eyes glued to the page before him, while he did his part manfully towards swelling the deafening volume of sound.

In vain did Darby seek in the broad, coarse, good-natured face of the rustic before him for any trace of guilt. Although he was utterly ignorant of the science of Lavater, having never in his life heard the word physiognomist, he was naturally shrewd, and he had been accustomed, for purposes of his own, to study the human countenance. The closest scrutiny satisfied him that there was nothing cruel nor sinister in Sam’s. Yet Bratton had undoubtedly been murdered, and here was Sam Jenkins wearing the murdered man’s hat. Where did he get it?

To the Pisgah congregation, “The Old Ship of Zion” was as inspiriting as “Partant pour la Syrie” was to the army of Napoleon. Before the second stanza was half over, Sister Brown had jumped up, tossed her arms aloft, and commenced to scream and clap her hands in an ecstasy of religious fervor. Soon several other sisters broke out shouting, some hugging their neighbors, sobbing and uttering excited ejaculations, others running up and down the aisle shaking hands with the brethren, &c. At this display of piety, the congregation sang louder than ever, the minister and leading brethren walked back and forth be-

fore the pulpit, exclaiming, "Thank God! Praise the Lord! Sing on, my brethren!" And many of the young people jumped upon the benches, the better to see and enjoy the performance. But Darby, through all the noise and upstir, never took his eyes off Sam; and as soon as the people began to file out of the church, he followed closely on young Jenkins' heels.

As soon as they got out in the yard, he caught Sam by the elbow and said in a severe and threatening tone, "Just step this way, young man; I've got a word with you." And he, in a manner, dragged the astonished youth a little apart from the crowd, now pouring tumultuously out of the house. Still holding Sam by the arm, he asked with magisterial dignity and inquisitorial scrutiny,

"Whar did you git that thar hat?"

"Taint none o' your business, whar I got it," was the response.

"You'd better give me a civil answer, or you'll be sorry for it," said Darby, flushing with anger at the contempt and defiance expressed in the youth's tone and manner.

"Look here, Jim Darby," said Sam, who knowing well that his costume was not altogether *comme il faut*, felt sensitive upon the subject, "do you think I'm a nigger to be ordered about by you and made to give account how I come by my clothes?"

"I think," replied the other, "that you are either the biggest fool or the most bare-faced vilyun I ever heard tell of, to be going round in the broad daylight with another man's hat on your head, and his name in it in his own hand-writin'—the very hat, too, that he had on when he was murdered; for I've got proof at last that *David Bratton was murdered*."

At these words, Sam jerked the hat off his head as if it burnt him, and stood a moment staring blankly at the name, which however was as unintelligible to him as the inscription on the Rosetta Stone would have been. Then, hailing Russell Thornton, who was passing, he approached him, and thrusting the hat under his eyes, said,

"I say, Mister, will you please read me this name?"

At the sight of the name, Russell started violently as Darby had done; but quickly recovering himself, with an impassive countenance and in his habitual tone, he inquired,

"Will you please tell me where you found this hat?"

"Yes," said Sam, "I'm always willing to give a civil answer to a civil question. I found it yesterday, when I was shooting ducks in Mr. Gordon's mash, right opposite Turkey Island. But you didn't tell me the name in it."

"It is Mr. Bratton's name," was the reply; "and this is the hat he had on when he was drowned. It seems to have washed ashore soon after, for it is not much injured by the water."

Although the young man all this time held the hat close under Russell's face, the latter had not touched it. But Darby, who had drawn close up to Sam's side, now took the hat in his own hands and commenced to examine it carefully.

"Umph!" said he, "here's a hole mightily like a bullet hole. Look, Mr. Thornton!"

"A bullet hole!" repeated the latter—"how could a bullet hole have got in it? I see a small hole on one side, but it must have been torn by a bush or eaten there by some insect."

"No bush never tore this hole, and no insect never eat it," declared

Darby; "its cut too clean and true right through band, felt, lining and all. I always said David Bratton was murdered, and I'm gitting the proof of it mighty fast. I come by your house on my way to church to tell you about my findin' Bratton's boat in the creek last night, but you was gone. I counted on callin' early this mornin', but I didn't finish my hedge till twelve o'clock, and so I overslept myself."

Then he proceeded to give a minute account of the finding of the boat, and its condition.

Russell listened with an air of perfect composure to Darby's narration, and at its conclusion said promptly, "The matter must be looked into. But I think you must be mistaken about the boat's having been scuttled. You remember that at the time of Mr. Bratton's disappearance, the water was high, the current strong, and the river full of drift-wood. The holes you found in the boat were doubtless broken there by its striking against the logs in the stream."

"No, indeed," persisted Darby; "I've seen too many auger holes, and bored too many not to know 'em when I see 'em. Davy was shot; and then when his body had been got out of the way, his boat was scuttled and sunk in Tapsico Creek, whar I spose 'twould 'a staid and rotted to pieces if I hadn't took a notion to put my hedge higher up the stream than common. It looks to me like something put that in my head, just to put me on the track of the murder. And I'm going to follow it up. I mean to go this very evening to see Mr. Duval, the Commonwealth's attorney, about it."

"Certainly, Mr. Darby, if there is anything suspicious about the boat, it must be investigated," said Russell; "but I think to-morrow will be time enough to do so. I do not see where anything is to be gained by beginning to-day. You, I am sure, would not like to leave this interesting meeting, and the services will not close till late. Then, Mr. Duval, may not be at home. He frequently dines out on Sunday. If you will wait till to-morrow, I will go with you to see him. The boat, I believe you said, is lying where you found it?"

"Yes, I thought it better to leave it there."

"Was any white man with you when you found it?"

"None but Ike Jackson. He happened to come up just as we was pulling it out of the water."

"Did he think the boat had been scuttled?"

"Lor! yes, he said, 'twas plain as daylight."

Mr. Lindsay's coachman had been so interested in watching the shouting through the window, that he did not get the carriage to the door in time for the ladies, who were eager to depart, being worn out with the protracted services and the noise and confusion. Russell was going to hasten his movements, when he had been stopped by Sam Jenkins and detained by Darby. When he rejoined Nora, her quick eye, or rather her keen instinct, discovered—for she rather felt than saw—that something was troubling him. Under his assumed calmness, she detected something of the strange look that had so puzzled and grieved her the day before. After he had handed them in the carriage and bidden them good-bye, this look still haunted her. But at last, unable to find any other solution of the mystery, she concluded that, like her aunt and herself, he was wearied out with the long, dull sermon, the noise and confusion and the heat and bad air of the crowded house.

After the Lindsays had gone, Russell helped his mother into the barouche; and as they drove off together, he noticed that the male por-

tion of the congregation were clustered around Darby and Sam Jenkins ; that they were listening eagerly to the former, who was talking loudly and gesticulating violently, and that the hat Sam had found in the marsh was being passed about from one to another, and examined with great interest.

For once in his life, Jim Darby's vanity was fully gratified. He was the observed of all observers, the centre of attraction. Tom Matthews, who by right should have been the hero of the occasion, was thrown completely into the background. For, although some of the most devout sisters congratulated him upon his ability and eloquence, and thanked him for the learned and powerful discourse of the morning, and plied him with roast, fowl, dried apple pie and sweet potato pudding, everybody else flocked about Darby to learn about the astonishing discoveries he had made, to discuss the supposed murder of Bratton, and to speculate as to the perpetrators of the crime. Upon this last subject, there was but one opinion—that expressed by Darby, that his lamented friend had been killed by the Brantley negroes ; for they were mostly non-slaveholders, and regarding the slaves with both antipathy and fear, were ready enough to accuse them of crime. And when Darby announced that he was to meet Russell Thornton the following morning to organize a party to search for the body, a good many offered their services to assist.

When the afternoon services were over, and the whole congregation was gathered in the church yard, bidding good-bye and extending the most cordial invitations to each other to dine and sup and spend the day and night, Darby prepared to go home. Being a man of mark for the nonce, he felt much gratified that his steed would so well bear inspection, and he had planned on starting to dash around the church-yard to show off the finest horse he had ever owned in his life. By Bratton's advice and assistance, he had raised a colt, which being now four years old, he was breaking to the saddle. She was really a very fine animal, and so spirited that Darby could scarcely ride her in her quietest moods. To-day, the noise and movement of the crowd had so excited her that he found it impossible to mount her without assistance ; and, seeing among a number of negroes hanging around the outskirts of the crowd some of those who had assisted him the night before in hedge building, he called out to them,

"Come here, boys, and hold her head for me. She keeps such a prancing and rearing that I can't get my foot in the stirrup."

At this summons, three or four rushed to the mare's head and caught hold of the bridle, while another held the stirrup for Darby. Thus assisted, he contrived to leap into the saddle, though the mare kept kicking and plunging all the time. Just as soon as the men loosened their hold on her head, she sprang forward, bolted wildly from side to side, then reared up and fell on her side, throwing her rider against a small tree and knocking him senseless. For a little while, it was feared that he was dying ; but a doctor who was present succeeded in restoring him to consciousness and pronounced his injuries not serious, assuring him that he would be all right in a week.

As soon as she could rise to her feet, the mare, to which the people had given a wide berth, galloped away in the direction of her stable. One of Darby's friends took him home in a spring wagon and helped him to bed.

A few days later Herbert received the following letter from his uncle:

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*"My Dear Nephew*—Since the receipt of your last letter, Lucy and myself have been extremely anxious about you ; and I write to entreat you that you will immediately leave the seminary, not to return until the fever disappears. As soon as we saw in the papers the notice of young Morton's having died there of typhoid fever, our fears were aroused. And when we heard that there were five other cases among the students, we became very anxious indeed. What you have just written us about your room-mate's being so ill with it, has filled us with the wildest alarm. Knowing what a delicate constitution yours is, and how terrible is the disease to which you are exposed, we are miserable about you. Your aunt beseeches you to come away at once, saying she can know no peace of mind while you remain ; and I earnestly unite with her in the request. Since we are so soon to lose Nora, you are all that is left to us ; so be careful of yourself, for our sakes. We would be delighted to have you come to us immediately ; but if that would not be agreeable to you, we will be satisfied to know that you are in any safe and healthy locality.

"All are well at Ingleside ; and everything is in trim for the wedding, now so near at hand. As I predicted, Lucy is absorbed heart and soul in the preparation of the bridal paraphernalia, and seems entirely reconciled to Russell as a nephew-in-law.

"In the meantime, though, some recent discoveries threaten to lead to consequences not much in harmony with wedding festivities. Last Saturday night, Jim Darby, while putting down a hedge in Tapsico Creek, found Bratton's boat, the same in which he left home on the last day of his life, at the bottom of the creek, full of auger holes. I have examined it, and there is no doubt of its having been scuttled. That same afternoon, some man found Bratton's hat in the marsh, the same one he wore away from home, marked with his name ; and in the hat, a little above the brim, is a hole evidently made by a bullet. I fear that Bratton was indeed murdered, as Darby said at first. There seems to be no doubt of it in the community ; and the general opinion is that the deed was committed by the Brantley negroes, who hated him cordially, and were doubtless goaded to this desperate act by his cruelty. Another circumstance has strengthened this suspicion.

"Last Sunday, Tom Matthews preached at Pisgah, and there was a general turn out to hear him. Darby was there full of the news of the finding of the boat, telling it to everybody, showing around the hat and uttering fearful threats against the Brantley negroes, whom he loudly proclaimed had committed the murder. He was riding that fine young mare of his that he is breaking, and when he was getting ready to leave, she was so restive that he asked a negro to hold her. In response, half a dozen of them rushed up and clustered around her head. As soon as Darby touched the saddle, they let her go, when she dashed about like a wild thing, threw Darby and nearly killed him. After this, she would not let a soul approach her, especially about the head. And as she seemed to be suffering a good deal, old Fenton, the English farrier, who has a smithy at the Forge Bridge, was sent for to examine her. He found a pebble in her ear, which, of course, had been put there by the negroes, to make her throw Darby.

"There was such a crowd around and so much excitement that no one can remember what negroes had the horse by the head ; but a dozen men testify that there were two negroes from Brantley in the crowd, Isaac Johnson and Dick Henderson. However, they failed in their de-

signs on Darby, for the doctor says he is doing well and will soon be about again. As soon as Darby is well enough, he is going to undertake a search for Bratton's body. In the meantime, measures will be taken to apprehend and convict the murderer, whether the body is found or not.

"You may imagine how painful it is to Nora and all of us to have this matter agitated at this time. I can but hope that nothing further will be discovered. Bratton is dead, and gone beyond the reach of mortal help, so that hanging his murderer could not do him any good; and he caused enough suffering in his lifetime, without effecting any more by his death.

"By the by, you will like to hear something about Tom Matthew's preaching. Your aunt and Nora were not at all pleased; they think he is too much puffed up by his knowledge, entirely too full of himself. 'A little learning is a dangerous thing,' you know. At any rate, it don't seem to agree with Tom's constitution. Take care that you don't get too smart yourself. You know we are a very simple folk hereabout.

"Please write immediately and tell us what you intend doing; and do not be so rash as to disregard our advice. All send love.

"Your affectionate uncle,

WM. LINDSAY."

Mr Lindsay's fears for Herbert's health were not groundless, and his advice was not given too soon. The intense application and the mental conflict of the past winter had left him in a very unfavorable condition to meet the trying and enervating spring weather. During the whole of March, he had been giving way, growing constantly paler and thinner, and so nervous that he passed many sleepless nights and languid, miserable days, when the mere act of breathing was a labor. Then the fever appeared among the students, and much of the time he had been accustomed to pass in the open air was now spent by their beds, in the close, fever-poisoned atmosphere of the sick room. Now that his room-mate, a fine young man for whom he had formed a strong attachment, was ill, he rarely found any time for exercise and had lost a great deal of sleep sitting up with him.

As he went to the postoffice the afternoon on which the above letter was received, he realized for the first time, how greatly his strength was reduced. Short as the distance was, he was forced to walk very slowly and even to stop and rest several times on the way. There was, too, such a strange feeling about his head, a heavy, dull aching, a confusion of ideas, an utter incapacity for connected thought. His nervous system also seemed quite unstrung. He started violently when a dog ran past him and even when a bird flew down in the path before him.

All through the session, the receipt of letters from Ingleside had excited him strangely. This afternoon, it was with an indefinable fear, a sickening dread, that he opened Mr. Lindsay's letter.

As he read it, his hand shook violently, his face grew deadly pale, and large beads of cold sweat gathered on his brow. When he had finished it, he stood leaning against the wall looking vacantly before him, scarcely conscious of his whereabouts.

"What's the matter, Mr. Lindsay?" said the postmaster, a kind-hearted man; "no bad news from home I hope?"

"Yes there is, and they write me to return immediately. At what hour does the stage leave here?"

"It is due here about two hours from now, and will leave as soon as the horses can be changed."

"Please engage me a seat in it."

Returning to his room, he made his hurried preparations for leaving, and when the stage stopped for him, he took his seat in it and drove away, looking and feeling like one in a dream. All night long he travelled in the strangest state, so drowsy that he was scarcely conscious of anything around him, and yet so nervous and restless that he was unable for a single moment to lose himself wholly in sleep. The next day, he dozed for a few moments at a time, dreaming the most frightful dreams. He was consumed by thirst, but had a perfect loathing for food; and with every mile of the way, the dull, heavy aching in his head grew worse, the mental confusion more distressing.

All his life long, he remembered that dreadful journey as a sort of protracted nightmare. An overpowering impulse to go on, alone commanded his failing strength and compelled his wandering faculties to direct his course. Notwithstanding the throbbing and aching of his head, the terrible languor that oppressed him, and the perplexed, bewildered feeling that at times almost lapsed into unconsciousness, he contrived to get himself and his baggage safely landed at the wharf near Ingleside late in the afternoon of the second day after leaving the seminary.

As he was not expected, there was, of course, no one to meet him; so, after having his trunk carried into a store near by, he asked the merchant to take charge of it until the next day, when he would send a cart for it.

"If you wait till my boy comes from the mill, you can have my horse to ride home, Mr. Lindsay," said the man, who had been regarding him compassionately.

"Thank you," Herbert replied; "but I cannot wait; I will walk on. It is not very far."

"No, not a great distance; but if you will excuse me for saying so, you don't look able to walk that far. Have you been sick?"

"No; I am not quite so strong as usual this spring; but I have not been sick. I fear, though, that I am going to be, for there is a strange feeling about my head."

"The boy will be back pretty soon now. I'm looking for him every minute, and you are welcome to the horse. You had better step into this back room and lie down until he comes. You won't lose any time by doing so."

Thus importuned, and feeling utterly exhausted, Herbert was about to comply, when looking out he saw Jim Darby approaching. The sight of this man filled him with a wild dismay, an abject terror that threatened to dethrone his tottering senses. Hastily bidding the merchant adieu, he passed out at the back door just as Darby appeared before the front entrance.

As soon as he was out of sight, he left the highway and plunged into the woods bordering the Chickahominy. Then, through brake and bramble, he followed the course of that stream to the mouth of Tapsico Creek. Here he sought the old beech tree under which he had sat on that fearful evening preceding his departure from Ingleside.

Often when brooding over the terrible scene he had witnessed there, the thought had crossed his mind that it might have been a sort of dream, a kind of nightmare. He remembered the excited condition of his nervous system, the mental depression into which Nora's rejection had plunged him, and the physical exhaustion from his rapid and aimless

wanderings through the muddy fields and the sodden woods. He remembered, too, how sometimes towards morning, when his slumbers were broken, while only half asleep, he had had some dreams which seemed so real that afterwards they would recur to him as actual facts, and it would require an effort to convince himself that the scenes so vividly stamped upon his memory were but false images of dreamland. And then he would try to coax himself into the belief that the burial in the wood must be as unreal as these, that anything so horrible, so dreadful, so heart-breaking, could not have actually occurred.

But in spite of his wishes and his efforts, he could not delude himself into this belief. Too many little incidents and circumstances attested the reality of the occurrence. And even if when in that strange condition of torpor under the beech tree, when unable to speak or move, imagination had conjured up that horrible scene to torture him, what followed had been too real to admit of doubt. The screech of the owl and the shock it had given were certainly real, but not more real than the finding and hiding of the handkerchief and dirk.

Often had he been tempted to return to the neighborhood, to visit the beech tree and seek these witnesses of that awful scene, not merely as confirmation of the fact, but to transfer them to some more secure hiding place. He had been frequently tormented with the fear that they might be discovered by some huntsman seeking in the hollow for a squirrel, raccoon or opossum, all of which abounded in the wood and were in the habit of burrowing in such places. Or he thought that these animals themselves in making their beds in the hollow, or in passing in and out, might throw out these dangerous articles. Knowing how slight a clue has oftentimes led to the discovery of the most secret and carefully contrived murders, he trembled at the thought of these things being still in such close proximity to that mutilated corpse. He wondered that he had left them there. Then he remembered the horror and loathing with which he had handled them, and the instinctive impulse to cast them away from him and leave them far behind him, where they could never shock his sight.

As soon as Mr. Lindsay's letter had been read, telling him of the finding of Bratton's boat full of auger holes and his hat pierced by a bullet, he remembered the handkerchief and dirk hidden in the beech tree, and had set off immediately to recover them. When he at last stood beside the tree, his heart seemed to stand still in his bosom. Were they still there? Thrusting his hand into the dark cavity, and moving it cautiously around, he soon encountered and drew out the dirk folded in the handkerchief. Perfectly protected from the weather and entirely undisturbed since placed there, they were precisely as he remembered them; and the sight of them recalling with fearful vividness that nocturnal interment, gave him a great shock. Scarcely daring to look at them, he thrust them hurriedly into the breast pocket of his coat, and buttoning it up to his chin, turned away.

He paused beside the grave, expecting the cedars which had been placed there six months ago to look withered and brown; but they were perfectly green. Carefully withdrawing one, he saw that it had been freshly cut, and around the spot he detected broken twigs from the dried bushes that had been removed. When he had replaced the bush precisely as he had found it, he started out of the wood. Before he had gone far, he noticed a heap of ashes and charred sticks, evidently where the dead cedars had been burned; and he carefully scattered these and gath-

ered up the dead leaves and sprinkled them over the spot to hide the traces of the fire.

Then, so tired and weak that he could scarcely walk, he dragged himself wearily across the fields to Ingleside. By the time he reached the house it was dark. His uncle, who was returning from the barn, met him on the edge of the yard. Mr. Lindsay was overjoyed to see him, and throwing his arm around him nearly bore him into the house.

"You cannot think, my dear boy, he said, what a relief and pleasure it is to me to see you. I was actually dreading to hear from you, lest you already had the fever. There is no disease that I dread like that. You know your father died of it, and our oldest sister, your aunt Hannah, was for years an invalid from its effects. I am so thankful that you have left that infected atmosphere. Your aunt feared that you could not be induced to leave your studies; but I told her you had never yet failed to regard my wishes, and I was sure you would not now disregard them. And, sure enough, here you are to verify my prediction, dear, good boy. I only hope you have come away in time to escape infection."

"But I cannot stay long at Ingleside," said Herbert. "I must take advantage of my enforced holiday to visit my mother's relations in the South before the weather gets too warm. You know it has been a long time since I saw them, as I cannot visit them in summer, and have been so constantly at school and college during the winter."

"Well, we must be thankful for even a flying visit. And I shall be satisfied to know that you are not exposed to disease, though far away from us."

As soon as they entered the library, where candles had been lighted, Mr. Lindsay noticed how pale and haggard his nephew was looking. His countenance became grave, and taking Herbert's hand in his, he anxiously felt his pulse. Although no physician, he knew enough about sickness to be alarmed at the fine, irregular, fluttering pulsations.

"You have traveled too fast, and are quite exhausted by your journey," he said. "Here, lie down on the sofa while I have your room made ready. I am housekeeper now, for your aunt and Nora are both sick. They drove out Monday in an open buggy and got caught in a hard shower half a mile from home. The wetting has made Lucy quite sick; but I think Nora would have escaped with only a slight sore throat but for the fatigue of housekeeping and nursing her aunt. She has been in bed all day, but is better this morning, and I hope will be up again by to-morrow."

This announcement was a great relief to Herbert, for all through his journey he had been thinking how could he meet Nora—how could he bear to see her again with Russell Thornton.

When Mr. Lindsay had given his orders to the servants, he returned to the library and began talking about the affairs of the plantation and the neighborhood.

"I wrote you what an upstir there was about the finding of Bratton's boat and hat, and how determined Darby is to get some of Russell Thornton's negroes hung for the murder. Well, he is up and about again, and to-morrow he will begin his search for the body. Although the respectable portion of the community care very little about the fate of Bratton, yet everybody now is of Darby's opinion, that he was killed by the Brantley negroes; and however well he may have merited his

fate, to let such a deed pass unpunished would be a dangerous precedent. For this reason, there is a strong determination in the community to discover and convict the murderers, if possible. It is generally believed that the body was weighted and sunk in the creek; so they will begin the search by dragging that stream. If they fail to find it there, they intend to search along both banks of the river and creek, in the woods and marshes. A good many have volunteered to assist in the search, and I think it will be very thorough."

"How does Russell take it all?" asked Herbert, holding his hands before his face as if to shield his eyes from the light. "I should think he would be much distressed if any of his negroes should be convicted of such a crime—they are so devoted to him, and he is truly attached to them. Bratton's cruelty to both inspired a mutual sympathy that formed a strong bond between them."

"He is very much troubled about it. He does not believe that Bratton was murdered by the Brantley negroes, and expresses the opinion that no evidence of such a thing can possibly be discovered. But he finds it very unpleasant and inconvenient to have all this suspicion and investigation and excitement and upstir going on on the very eve of his marriage. And it is certainly very awkward and disagreeable for us all. I hope that nothing more will be discovered, and that it will all end in smoke. Russell had intended going to Richmond this week to conclude the preparations for his marriage; but, of course, for the sake of appearances, if nothing else, he will have to join the searching party."

It was with difficulty that Herbert had maintained the conversation so far. Now the coma which had hung over him so long stole irresistibly over his senses and wrapped him in a lethargic slumber. For two hours his uncle let him sleep, thinking it was the sleep of exhaustion. Then he deemed it best to awaken him, that he might take some nourishment and go to bed.

When Herbert was aroused, he started up as in affright, and uttered some incoherent ejaculations, evidently not realizing his whereabouts. But he quickly mastered his wandering senses, and, after drinking a cup of tea, went to his chamber. Mr. Lindsay accompanied him thither, made him lie down on the lounge, and bade him not to stir until Tom should come with warm water to bathe his feet.

"I have told him," he said, "that he must bring a mattress in and sleep beside your bed, in case you should need anything during the night. And if you feel worse, you must send him to call me."

Near the head of Herbert's bed stood a small sole-leather trunk he had brought with him from the South, which he valued as having belonged to his father, and in which he kept his most precious treasures. These consisted chiefly of mementoes of his mother—her wedding dress and veil, the last dress she had worn, her watch and jewelry, her Bible and hymn-book, letters and diary. These he guarded with the most jealous care, keeping the trunk closely locked and wearing the key suspended by a little silver ring to his watch-chain. Mrs. Lindsay called this ancient trunk and its contents his Lares and Penates; and upon the occasions of the semi-annual house-cleanings, when every movable object was taken out of the chambers to allow full scope to the broom and scrubbing-brush, she was wont to give the servants most particular directions to handle it carefully. Hence, every one on the place regarded it with the utmost reverence and never thought of meddling profanely with it. This Herbert well knew; so as soon as his uncle had left the room he unlocked

this cherished receptacle, hurriedly put the dirk and handkerchief into it, relocked it, replaced the key on his watch-chain, and then put the watch in the fob which, for convenience, he always kept hanging at the head of his bed.

He had scarcely done this, when Tom came in and proceeded to carry out his master's directions. While doing this, with the freedom of a favorite and privileged servant, he volunteered much information about what had transpired upon the plantation and in the community during Herbert's absence. A great deal of this gossip the young master scarcely heard and did not heed at all; but every reference to Bratton's murder aroused his attention instantly.

"I tell you what, Mars Herbert, said Tom, "you never in your born days see folks so skeered as the colored folks at Brantley is; for, Mr. Darby look like he fully determined to git some of 'em hung anyhow. They all swars that they aint never set eyes on Mr. Bratton since he went away from home that day. And Mrs. Bratton and Mars Russell blieves every word they says. But don't nobody else blieve it; and they don't all blieve one another. Isaac Johnson, you know, got a wife here; I reckon Mars William done write you how him and Milly Simpson got married last Christmas."

"Well, sorter accidental like, I overheard Millie telling her mammy that Isaac say Dick Henderson been going on mighty strange ever since Mr. Bratton died—that he 'fraid to put his nose outside the cabin after dark, and he see evils every time he go near the gret house. He say Dick used to be a mighty coon hunter, and now nobody can't git him to go coon hunting not for love nor money. And he say ever since Jim Darby done find Mr. Bratton's boat Dick skeered most to death—half the time he can't eat his vittles, and he done fell away to skin and bones and look right ashy."

"Well, I am very sorry for the Brantley negroes," said Herbert. "It is perfectly natural that they should be troubled when everybody is accusing them of such a terrible crime. Like Russell and Mrs. Bratton, I am convinced of their innocence. As for Dick Henderson, I know he did not do it."

"Lor! Mars Herbert, how ken you *know* Dick never done it?" asked the negro eyeing him keenly.

"To be sure," replied Herbert, collecting his wandering senses, "how can I *know* anything about it? What I mean to say is that I don't believe Dick is capable of such a deed. I was always fond of Dick. He is near my age, and Russell and myself have had him about us a great deal; we used often to take him with us hunting to carry the game."

"Yes, and Mars Russell learnt him how to shoot too; and everybody knows how true he could aim. Mrs. Bratton used to make him shoot the guinea fowls that was too wild to catch. And they all say Mr. Bratton give Dick a terrible whipping not long before he was killed."

"I tell you," said Herbert, growing excited, "that Dick Henderson did not kill Mr. Bratton. But if you and his other fellow servants, who ought to have some feeling for him, go on talking about him this way, you will get him hung all the same. There are plenty of instances on record of innocent people having been hung for crimes they never committed, all from circumstantial evidence. And you are all weaving a nice chain against poor Dick."

"Lor! Mars Herbert, I aint told nobody but you what Isaac Johnson say. I wouldn't hang Dick no sooner en you would."

"Well, then, see that you don't repeat it to another living soul. We all like Dick, and if he should get hung through any of your idle babbling, you may be sure Uncle William would sell you straight to the packwoods."

This sharp rebuke, more especially coming from Herbert, who so seldom reproved any one, had the effect of instantly stopping Tom's arrulity ; and he finished his ministrations in silence.

## CHAPTER VII.

Shortly after dawn the next morning, Mr. Lindsay went to Herbert's room. Tom, who had not stirred during the night, was snoring loudly at the foot of the bed. Herbert lay on his back quite still. His face was white and drawn, and had the shrunken, weary look of age peculiar to some maladies. His lips were dry and parted, and the end of his tongue, parched and fiery red, protruded between his teeth. His eyes were only half closed, and the balls were turned upward, leaving a line of white between the parted lids. Mr. Lindsay laid his hand upon the white forehead and started to find it so dry and hot.

At his uncle's touch, Herbert stirred, tossed his head from side to side, opened his heavy eyes, and commenced picking at the bed-clothes, muttering incoherently. There was no mistaking these symptoms. Hurriedly awaking Tom, Mr. Lindsay demanded :

"How did your Mars Herbert pass the night?"

"Very well, sir," was the response of the sleepy negro, as he rubbed his eyes to keep them open.

"Didn't he call you up at all during the night?"

"No, sir; nary time. He slept fust rate."

"At any rate, it's plain that *you slept fust rate*. I ought to have known better than to leave him to you. Any one might as well put a stump to watch in a sick-room as a negro. If I had had any idea he was so sick, I would have had Aunt Patsey to stay with Lucy and spent the night in his room myself; but I thought he was only fatigued by the journey."

Then he ordered Tom to go and bid Harry to saddle the fleetest horse on the place and ride as fast as he could for Dr. Minns.

There was great distress in the household and on the plantation when Herbert's situation became known. Mrs. Lindsay was too ill to leave her bed; but Aunt Patsy, the plantation nurse, was installed in the sick chamber, and Nora went in often and bathed his head and hands in iced vinegar. He lay most of his time in a heavy, lethargic slumber; but when he did arouse, he recognized no one, and uttered only a few incoherent ejaculations.

The doctor, who came in all haste, pronounced his disease typhoid fever of the most malignant type, and looked very grave when questioned by Mr. Lindsay as to the chances of recovery.

"It is impossible to tell anything about that," was his reply. "Recovery in these cases depends more on the constitution of the patient than the method of treatment. A great deal, too, depends on the nursing. There is perhaps no disease which requires such skillful and careful nursing as this."

"Well, do the best you can for him, doctor. Give him all the time

you can possibly spare from your other patients. Indeed, I wish you could remain with him constantly."

"There is no need of that at this time. The fever, after it reaches this stage, has to run its course. All we can do now is to try to reduce its violence and keep up the strength of the patient. The crisis will not be reached for several days. This attack has been coming on for some time; and Herbert's journey has aggravated its violence. He could not have done anything more injurious."

Mrs. Lindsay required a good deal of attention from her husband and Nora; but one of them was always at Herbert's bedside, and Aunt Patsy never left his room. He lay sunk in a lethargic slumber, his eyes half open, his burning lips apart. All they could do was to bathe his hot brow and hands, moisten his parched lips, and administer the medicine the doctor had left and the milk-toddy, which was his only nourishment. Occasionally he would start up from this heavy sleep and utter a few disjointed sentences, the foolish utterances of delirium.

That night Mr. Lindsay would not trust his nephew with any one. He dismissed Nora and Aunt Patsy, keeping only Tom to bear him company, and render any needed assistance during the night-watches.

When Nora started into Herbert's room the next morning, she met her uncle in the library, just coming out of the sick room. She had never seen him look so old, so worn and haggard. His wife's sickness had caused him much fatigue and loss of sleep, and this, combined with anxiety and distress on Herbert's account, and the fatigue and watching of the past night, seemed to have quite prostrated him.

"Dear Uncle," said his niece, putting her arms around his neck, "how weary and wretched you look! I will watch with Herbert to-night, no matter what you say; for you must get a good night's sleep, or you will be ill yourself. How does Herbert seem this morning? And how did he rest last night?"

"He is certainly no better, and I fear is much worse—has more fever and is more restless. He was very quiet during the first part of the night; but after two o'clock, he did not close his eyes until a little while ago, he fell asleep. And when awake he is like a maniac. His mind seems full of Bratton's murder; I suppose because it was the last subject that occupied his thoughts before he lost his senses, for we were talking about it just before he went to bed that night he got here.

"He seems to imagine himself as participating in it, talks in the most excited manner of how Bratton looked lying on the ground with the blood running out of his head— Ugh! its enough to make one's hair stand on end to witness his horror and terror at the fearful images his delirium conjures up. I never spent such a trying night; it seemed that morning would never come.

"Tom, poor fellow, was nearly scared to death. Dreadful as it all was, the way he showed the whites of his eyes was truly comical."

"Poor Herbert," said Nora, "he is so gentle and tender-hearted that anything cruel or terrible would impress him strongly. Besides, he knew that we were all greatly disturbed about these rumors of Mr. Bratton's having been murdered; and that would cause him to dwell upon it."

Mr. Lindsay continued: "In his ravings, too, he is continually talking about Dick Henderson in connection with the murder, which is strange indeed. This morning, Dr. Minns told me confidentially that Darby suspects Dick of the murder, and is getting up quite a chain of circumstantial evidence against him. Owing to Dick Henderson and

Isaac Johnson having been around his mare's head when the pebble was put into her ear, his suspicions were aroused against them ; and he has ever since been watching and spying and nosing around and cross questioning the negroes. He has learnt nothing suspicious of Johnson, but I am very sorry to say that he has discovered a good deal that goes against poor Dick. In the first place, Bratton, a few days before his death, had given him a severe whipping ; and in the second place, Dick is a fine shot and the only negro on the place that can handle a gun. Also, Dick was working by himself that evening, down by the creek, cleaning out a drain. Then, too, he has betrayed a good deal of excitement and uneasiness since the finding of the boat and the hat.

"Now Herbert cannot have heard a word of this, for it is only known to three or four persons, and they are keeping it a profound secret, hoping by close observation and investigation to arrive at other facts."

"But uncle," Nora observed, "Herbert must have heard what every one is talking about, that the negroes at Brantley are suspected of Mr. Bratton's murder ; and as Dick had waited on him and Russell a good deal and is quite a favorite with him, it is natural that he should feel some uneasiness on this particular negro's account, which betrayed itself in his delirium."

"Perhaps so. But I sincerely wish his imagination would take some other turn. I never in my life was so shaken as I have been by his ravings. I can't help thinking, though, that there is some 'method in his madness.' The very afternoon of the murder Herbert was wandering about in the fields and woods bordering the creek until a late hour ; and it has occurred to me that he probably saw or heard something there that he did not understand at the time, but which has been explained by recent discoveries, and that it was to communicate this information he started the very moment my letter was received and traveled so rapidly and continuously to Ingleside."

"Did he hint at such a thing on the night of his arrival?"

"No, not a word. He hardly talked at all, and seemed scarcely to listen to what was said to him, appeared, in fact, to be entirely overcome with weariness and drowsiness. I don't think he had full command of his faculties even then."

As soon as Darby recovered from his fall, he set to work to organize a party to search for Bratton's remains. Besides Darby, the dead man had left but few friends ; but numbers of idle and ignorant people, impelled by motives of curiosity and a love of excitement, volunteered to assist in recovering his body and giving it Christian burial. Other citizens of character and standing, actuated by a laudable public spirit, lent their aid to the enterprise, deeming it due to the public safety to have the murderers identified and punished, especially as they were supposed to be slaves, who must by all means be kept in a wholesome fear of the higher powers. These incongruous elements were very loosely organized, and being led by Jim Darby, whom no one felt inclined to follow, did not promise to be very efficient. Nobody seemed to recognize a necessity for expedition, for it was by no means a busy country or a busy people ; and so they proceeded in the most leisurely manner.

As their operations would be conducted in the immediate vicinity of Brantley, where Bratton had so lately been master, Mrs. Bratton and Russell felt called upon, in obedience to the requirements of that hospitable region, to entertain the whole party at dinner. On an occasion like the present, anything but a sumptuous repast from persons of their fortune

would have been considered very mean indeed. Accordingly, a bounteous provision of all the varieties of fish, flesh and fowl abounding in that plentiful locality, was daily placed before the searching party. This was liberally garnished with the fine liquors of which the deceased had left such a large supply. The dinner hour was three o'clock, and when the dainty viands had been consumed and the fine wines and brandy freely imbibed, the party were not equal to any greater exertion during the afternoon than a discussion of the morning's operations and the arrangement of a plan for those of the following day.

Among a people so social and convivial, especially as no one but Darby felt the least personal interest in the matter, the enterprise bade fair to degenerate into a mere frolic. In fact, the whole affair had rather the appearance of an extensive fox or deer hunt than the unraveling of a fearful mystery by which one fellow-man had been hurried to the bar of God, and through which another was likely to have his thread of life cut short by a terrible death.

The first morning had been devoted to the dragging of the creek; which brought nothing further to light. It was nearly ten o'clock the next day before the whole party were assembled and ready to begin their search on land, along the borders of the river and creek. Darby proposed that they should begin the search on the latter stream, immediately in the vicinity where the boat was found. Mr. Duval insisted that there would be much more probability of finding the body in the marsh, where the hat was discovered. Everybody immediately seconded his views, for no other reason in the world than that they were opposed to Darby's. So, to that locality they all repaired and spent the whole morning wading through water, plunging through mud, tearing their clothes and scratching their faces and hands, without discovering the slightest trace of what they were seeking. Then, tired and hungry, they went to Brantley and spent the afternoon as they had done the preceding day.

Everybody seemed satisfied with the manner in which things were progressing except Darby, who was chagrined at the opposition he had met with, and seemed in a very fierce humor indeed. When the rest had all gone, he lingered behind, greatly to the disgust of Russell, whose pet aversion he was. But much as the young man disliked Darby, he had been studiously polite to him throughout the recent proceedings. And upon this occasion he redoubled his attentions, became affable, even jovial, and condescended to a little delicate flattery in the effort to chase the cloud from Darby's countenance. But in this he was unsuccessful; and when they were at length alone, the unwelcome guest with a severe tone and a manner of threatening mystery, desired that Mrs. Bratton might be requested to meet them. As soon as she had made her appearance, he acquainted her and her son with his suspicions against Dick, and laid before them the evidence he had collected, telling them in conclusion that he intended to have the negro arrested the next day and lodged in jail.

They were both much disturbed at Darby's communication, for Dick was a favorite servant and the last one on the plantation they would have suspected of such a crime. They assured Darby that he had been misled by appearances, for that Dick was utterly incapable of such a deed.

Russell said that he was the gentlest, most docile creature in the world, and the most inoffensive, would not hurt a fly. Moreover, he declared that Dick had gotten along with Mr. Bratton better than any negro on the estate.

This statement was corroborated by Mrs. Bratton, who said that the negro had always been respectful and obedient to her husband, and that, when sober, Mr. Bratton had always been kind to him. She had often heard him say that if Dick Henderson belonged to him he wouldn't take two thousands dollars for him. The very morning of his death Dick had brought him his pistol he had lost in the field, and Mr. Bratton had given him a dollar for finding it. If the negro had intended killing him, he would have kept the pistol to do it with; for she knew Dick didn't have any firearms of his own, and no way of getting the use of any. And she reminded Darby that he himself had patrolled the plantation and the community long enough and thoroughly enough to know this to be true.

But Darby was hard to convince. He held to the belief that Dick had committed the murder, and persisted in the determination to have him arrested.

Russell was determined that the negro should not be arrested, and so redoubled his efforts to dissuade Darby from taking any immediate action. He and his mother argued and expostulated, and entreated the obstinate creature to relinquish his purpose, representing to him that by getting off on this false scent, he would allow the real murderer an opportunity to escape.

In order to carry his point, the young man formed the project of keeping Darby all night at Brantley, and feeding and flattering him and plying him with liquor until he should be in a more amiable and accommodating mood.

This interview had taken place in the dining room, and during the discussion Darby went frequently to the side-board, which was covered with decanters, to relieve his thirst. To encourage him in drinking, Russell brought out a bottle of very fine brandy they had been keeping for sickness, and took a glass with him. Then when Darby had drunk freely of this, the young man brought from the cellar a bottle of Maderia wine from among several dozens which had been corked up on the day of his birth and put away to be drunk at his wedding, and which had been in the house forty years. Finding the wine veritable nectar, and being quite overcome by the compliment thus paid him, Darby's features began to relax; he grew bland and jovial.

The fine supper, which was served at any early hour, completed the conquest. Darby was a born epicure; and since Bratton's death he had not partaken of a meal entirely to his liking till these last two dinners at Brantley. Seeing, through his muddled senses, that the present master of Brantley seemed anxious to propitiate him, and knowing that he could always count on Mrs Bratton's good nature, he conceived the idea that by playing his cards well he might re-establish his intimacy in the family, and drop in as of yore, about once a week, to dine or take supper, to say nothing of the chance of more substantial benefits.

So, as soon as supper was over and the servants had left the room, he said to Mrs. Bratton,

"I'm entirely of your opinion, madame; I don't believe Dick Henderson had any hand in putting poor Dave out of the way. And as he's a favorite nigger of yours, I shan't take no steps against him. Davy was more to you than he was to me; and you've got more interest in punishing his murderer than I ken have; so in this matter, I'll jest abide by what you say."

Not long after supper, Darby fell asleep in his chair, when Russell took occasion to say,

"Well, Mr. Darby, we've had a hard day's work, and I see you are getting tired and sleepy; suppose we go to bed."

To this proposition Darby gladly assented. He was now so drunk that Russell and the servant had almost to carry him to his room. Russell left the man to put him to bed, and going to the rack where his horse had been standing for half an hour, mounted it and rode away.

He had heard the day before that Herbert was ill at Ingleside; and this morning, when going out with the searching party, he had met Dr. Minns just from his friend's bedside. He had been much distressed to learn from the doctor how dangerous was Herbert's illness, and how slender the chance of his recovery. All day, he had been trying to get away from his guests to go and visit him, but he had found this impossible until now. He ought to have known better than to go at such an unseasonable hour to a house where there was serious illness; but his head was not very clear.

In his character of host, he had felt called upon to drink at dinner much more than was his habit; and, subsequently, in the process of reducing Darby, he had found it necessary to take several glasses more. The ride through the cool night air cleared his senses somewhat; but his mind was still a little confused, and his nerves were very unsteady when he reached Ingleside.

Herbert passed the day much better than Mr. Lindsay had expected. The doctor, who came very early, directed his head to be shaven, and linen cloths wrung out of ice water to be applied every five minutes. This treatment seemed to quiet him, and he slept heavily most of the time. When awake, although not violent, he was perfectly unconscious, recognizing no one. Nora he mistook for his mother, who had been dead five years; and, under this delusion, he would obey her wishes and take medicine or nourishment more readily from her than another. Often, as she bent over him, he would throw his arms around her neck and say:

"Dearest mother, I have missed you so! Why did you stay away so long?"

And once, when she was giving him some crushed ice, he drew her head down to his pillow, and pressing his cheek to hers, whispered:

"You love me, mother; don't you, dearest? But Nora does not. She loves Russell; but she ought not to marry him. If she only knew what I know—"

"What is it that you know?" Nora whispered in return. But he shook his head, saying:

"That I cannot tell even you, mother; for Nora must never know it—no, never."

Several times he awoke in the frantic state Mr. Lindsay had described, raving about Mr. Bratton's murder, and describing the burial with the utmost minuteness. He never mentioned the names of the parties who had performed the burial; but he always ended in a violent assertion of Dick Henderson's innocence.

"Dick did not do it. He is innocent. It was the other."

Once Nora bent down to his pillow a face almost as pallid as his own, and whispered tremulously:

"Who was it, Herbert? Whisper softly in my ear the name of the man who killed Mr. Bratton."

"Not to save my own life," he cried. "She might hear; and she must never, never know it."

These paroxysms of excitement had occurred early in the afternoon. During the closing hours of the day and the early part of the night, he

lay perfectly quiet, sunk in a profound stupor so like death that it filled the watchers with awe and dread.

Mr. Lindsay, notwithstanding his watch of the preceding night, had spent most of the day by his nephew's bedside, so great was his anxiety. Early in the night, seeing that Herbert continued quiet and sleeping, and being himself overcome with fatigue and drowsiness, he retired to his chamber to take a nap, leaving Aunt Patsy and Nora in charge of the patient.

As soon as her master had withdrawn, the colored nurse ensconced herself in the big easy chair behind the door, and settled herself for a nap, with her head leaning back in a deep corner of the chair and her hands crossed above it. And through the tragic scenes that followed, until her master returned to the room and aroused her by a violent shaking, she slept profoundly, only rubbing her nose with the back of her hand, and snorting and grunting at an unusually loud tone or movement.

The capacity of the colored race for profound slumber under unfavorable circumstances is proverbial. It is a matter of history that while the marines were storming the armory at Harper's Ferry, where John Brown had taken refuge with his party, the negroes who had been drawn to his standard, and for whose freedom he was risking his life, slept soundly. I have seen them, non-combatants, women and children, sleep through a fierce engagement within less than half a mile of the line of battle, a whole battery of artillery thundering within a few yards of the cellar where they lay, while bullets were whistling through the air, and bombs bursting around them. And in the most spirited political contests, in the position of judges of election, they nod over the very ballot-box they are so eager to guard.

It is, then, not strange that Aunt Patsy, who had now been two days confined to the sick room, and had lost some sleep the preceding night, should have fallen asleep in the profound stillness of Herbert's chamber, and failed to arouse when the silence was broken by his ravings, to which her ear had become accustomed.

Nora herself, in spite of her distress and anxiety, being fatigued with nursing through the day, felt a drowsiness stealing over her senses, as she sat perfectly motionless in the profound silence of the dimly-lighted chamber. But she was instantly aroused by Herbert's starting up and exclaiming in tones of consternation and acute distress :

"It's all up now. Dick has told everything. But who could blame him?—under the gallows with the rope around his neck. True, a slave's testimony won't convict his master ; but it has put them on the right track ; and Darby is following it up. He saw me at the river the evening I came home, and followed me to the beech-tree by the grave, and watched me take the dirk and handkerchief out of the hollow and bring them away. And he and the sheriff are coming here to search for them ; I hear the sound of their horses' feet."

And with the marvelous strength of delirium he sprang from his bed, took the key from his watch-chain, opened the trunk, and taking out the articles in question, thrust them into Nora's hand, crying :

"Take them away, mother ; hide them in your room ; but don't read the name. Nora must never know—never !"

Then, exhausted with the effort, he fell upon the bed speechless and motionless and gasping for breath.

Feeling as if in a horrid nightmare, Nora stood a moment unable to move, scarcely seeming to breathe. Then compassion and a sense of re-

sponsibility engendered by her position, impelled her almost automatically to raise his head to the pillow, lift his limbs into the bed, and arrange the covering about him.

This done, she tottered rather than walked into the library, where a lamp was burning upon the table; and holding the articles Herbert had given her to the light, she read the name upon the dirk and saw the blood on the handkerchief. As she did so, they dropped from her hand to the table, and she sank, half fainting, into a chair beside it, and buried her face in her hands, pressing her fingers to her eyelids to shut out the sight of that name which seemed written in letters of flame upon her burning brain.

But though her brain seemed on fire, her hands were icy, and she shivered with cold. Her mind was a chaos. For a moment, she could not remember either the source or the nature of the bolt which seemed to have shivered the foundations of her being. Presently, above the floods of anguish surging through her soul, arose the wondering, despairing cry, "Can it be? Can it be?"

Yes, as Mr. Lindsay had said, there was *method* in Herbert's *madness*. He had spent that fatal evening in the woods and fields bordering the creek. He had set off the moment he heard of the finding of the boat and hat, and, weak and sick as he was, had traveled day and night to Ingleside. Evidently the object of his hurried journey had been to recover and reconceal the dirk and handkerchief he had taken from that sacred receptacle, his father's trunk.

And this delirious confession explained so many things she had thought so strange, so puzzling, principally looks and tones that she had found it impossible to interpret. But in the light of this terrible revelation, "Trifles, light as air, seemed confirmation strong as holy writ." Russell's trying so hard to hasten their marriage, on what she had considered the absurd plea that if deferred something might occur to prevent it, and the wild, desperate hunted look of which she had spoken at Brantley—all were explained. She recalled the occasions upon which she had noticed this peculiar and terrible expression, and always the conversation or circumstances had been such as to have a bearing upon this fearful subject. That evening at Brantley, when she had so unwittingly sung "Come Rest in This Bosom," how cruelly suggestive he must have found the song! How vividly she recalled the look and tone with which he had asked her if her love could stand such a test. Then that Sunday at Pisgah, when the finding of the boat and hat had become known, as Russell handed her into the carriage, under his assumed calmness, she had detected that same strange, terrible look. Everybody knew how much and with what good reason he had hated his step-father; and through the gossip of the negroes, the whole community had heard of the desperate encounter between them which had led to Russell's leaving home. Doubtless there had been a later encounter, and with this terrible result.

The folding doors between the library and parlor were standing wide open to admit the air; and in the chaos which always reigns in a household where there is extreme illness, the glass door leading from the parlor to the yard had been left ajar. Seeing this, and fearing to disturb Herbert by knocking at the hall door, Russell walked in unannounced. And when he saw Nora in the library, he proceeded directly thither.

His face bore traces of the intense excitement of the past ten days. His eyes were hollow, encircled by dark rings and unnaturally bright; and his cheeks were sunken and deeply flushed.

Absorbed in her terrible thoughts, Nora did not hear his approach, did not notice that he was beside her till he spoke :

"Dear Nora, how is Herbert to-night? I only heard of his extreme illness this morning; and I have been trying all day to get to see him, but could not till now."

She slowly lifted her head from her hands and raised her white face to his. It might have been a marble image with its rigid look of frozen horror.

Seeing her anguish, and thinking only of Herbert, he exclaimed in acute distress,

"Is it indeed so bad? He is not—oh! I hope he is not dead?"

With the slow, uncertain motion of a somnambulist, she shook her head, and extending her hand, pointed to the dirk and handkerchief before her.

As his eyes rested on them, he started violently. Terror, anguish, despair chased each other over his convulsed features, then met and blended into the fearful expression which so often had pained and puzzled her. For a moment he was speechless; then he asked hoarsely,

"Where did you get them?"

In a strained, unnatural tone, resonant of such terrible accusation and reprobation that it froze his blood, she replied,

"Where did you lose them?"

The door leading from the library into Herbert's room was wide open, and his bed stood immediately in front of it, in full view of both Russell and Nora. The sound of their voices aroused him, and he started up trembling violently and throwing his arms about in a frantic manner.

He was a ghastly and pitiable object, with his shaven head and white face, the features pinched and drawn, the parched lips, and burning eyes. In the high shrill tones of fever, he cried out,

"O, mother, save me. Darby says I killed Mr. Bratton with the dirk and then hid it in the hollow beech. But I did not; you know that I did not."

Then, with a rapid, excited utterance, interrupted by little breaks and pauses, as if he found it hard to keep the thread of his narration, he went on :

"I could not help seeing it. I was resting under the old beech tree when they brought Mr. Bratton's body and laid it down behind the cedar bushes. Then they dug a grave, but it was too short, and they cut off his legs. Then they cut bushes with an axe and a dirk and stuck them over the grave—

"When they were going away, the man dropped his handkerchief. I picked it up, and the dirk too that he had let fall; and I hid them in the old beech—

"Then I went away somewhere—and they told me Mr. Bratton was drowned—but I knew better—

"Then my head ached always—and they told me Mr. Bratton was killed, and Jim Darby was going to search in the hollow beech tree for his body—

"And I came home—fast—oh! so fast, to take away the dirk and handkerchief with *his* name on it. But Darby met me at the river, and followed me and watched me.

"He says I killed Mr. Bratton. Mother, dear mother, they are going to hang me. Save me! Oh! save me," he murmured despairingly as his voice died away under the benumbing stupor of exhaustion.

But in another moment, he started up more violently than ever, shrieking,

"It is all out now! Everything has come out! Everybody has heard it! Everybody knows now what I have known so long, that *Russell Thornton killed Mr. Bratton.*"

Entirely exhausted by this last wild outburst of frenzy, he fell back, apparently dead or dying.

But no one could think now of his condition.

Nora sat immovable, and listened with the same fixed, stony look she had first turned upon Russell.

Russell, livid and rigid, stood with his burning eyes fastened unwinkingly on Herbert, as if held spell-bound by some baleful fascination.

Then he sank on his knees before Nora, holding out his clasped hands beseechingly to her, while in a voice of the deepest contrition and keenest anguish, he cried,

"O, Nora, can you ever forgive me that I would have made you the wife of a murderer?"

"Not to me! Kneel not to me!" she cried. "I am a weak and sinful mortal like yourself. I could not hurt you if I would; and I would not if I could—for I love you—too well—alas! too well. But kneel to God, Russell—to the great and holy Being whose law you have broken. Kneel to him, and pray that he will pardon and save your guilty soul."

"I have," he said in an humble, broken voice, as he slowly rose to his feet. "A hundred times, in the broad light of day and the dark fearful hours of the night, I have prayed for the forgiveness of my dreadful sin. But I could never feel that my prayer was answered. Because, perhaps, I did not pray in faith. For since that terrible deed, I seem to have lost faith in all I ever believed. Over and over again, my soul cries out, 'If there is an all-seeing, all powerful and holy God, watching over and controlling all things, if I am his creature and the object of his care, why did he permit me to do this foul deed? Why did he suffer that momentary madness to sweep over me blighting and ruining all my existence?'"

"One minute before I shot Bratton, I was as innocent of any thought or intention of murder as you are at this moment. Five minutes before, if anybody had told me I could do such a deed, I should have thought him mad. And yet I did it; for *every word Herbert has just said is true.* But he did not see it all; there is no living witness of the act but myself."

So far he had spoken slowly and with difficulty, his hands clasped tightly together and his head hanging upon his breast. Now, with his head raised and his sad and earnest gaze riveted upon her face, with a clearer, stronger, and more rapid utterance, he proceeded, as if he found a sort of mournful relief in this confession of the long concealed, fearful secret that for six terrible months had been eating into his soul.

"There was no witness to the deed," he repeated; "but you will believe my statement on my bare word, and so would that dear boy, who, I know, has suffered almost as much as I have."

"On that fatal evening, I was walking along the river bank with my gun, looking out for wild ducks. I had passed through Brantley, thinking I might see some of the hands in the field and send a message to my mother. I saw Dick Henderson ditching in one of the lower fields, and after entrusting him with my message, I was returning to Mr. Tayloe's along the river bank, as I have said. I had my double-barrelled gun.

One barrel was loaded with shot and the other with a ball, as I had been practising at target-shooting with Mr. Tayloe that morning. Presently, in a bend of the river, I saw some ducks swimming near the middle of the stream, and remembering what fine shots I had made that morning, I thought I would try to take off the head of the foremost one with a bullet. Just as I was taking aim, Mr. Bratton came around the bend in his boat.

"I had heard that after I had chastised him so severely for striking my mother, he had sworn to shoot me on sight; but I thought it merely an idle threat. So I took no pains to conceal myself, but stood quietly on the river bank, still holding up my gun, although his advance had frightened the ducks away. Whether he thought I was aiming at him, and so acted in self-defence, or whether he meant to carry out his threat of revenge, I do not know; but as soon as he saw me, he seized his gun, which was lying in the bottom of the boat, and pointing it at me, raised it to his shoulder.

"You do not know—it is impossible that you should ever know what it is to hate as I hated that man. The forced daily association for years with a nature so coarse and mean; the constant sense of the degradation and outrage of such a connection; the keen smarting under his cruel tyranny, which had often goaded me nearly to madness—all in a moment swept over me, and with it the fierce fury I had felt the very last time I had seen him, when he tried to kill me and nearly killed my mother. He had himself come within range of my gun, and my finger was already on the trigger. It was the work of an instant, scarcely an act of volition to press it.

"*I never miss.* He fell, and as he did so, his head struck against the side of the boat and his hat fell into the water. I did not think of this at the time; but I remembered it afterwards, and tried hard to find the hat and destroy it. It was reserved by fate to bear witness to that fatal shot.

"As soon as I saw Bratton fall, I was stricken with terror and remorse, crushed with a sense of the enormity of my crime; and I would gladly have given my own life to restore that of the wretched creature I had slain. A wild hope sprang up that he was not dead, only wounded; and I plunged in the river and swam to the boat, intending, if possible, to save him. But he had ceased to breathe.

"A mighty terror, an overwhelming fear, such as I cannot describe, and such as your innocent soul could not possibly understand, seized me. My terrible danger, the overmastering instinct of self-preservation, alone possessed me.

"My plans were hastily formed and as hastily carried out. I rowed the boat back into the creek, and moored it in a laurel thicket on the Brantley side of the stream. Then I went where Dick was ditching, and made him take his tools and follow me. We crossed the creek, and buried the body in the woods on the other side, as Herbert has described.

"Oh, God! it was a ghastly sight! I do not wonder that it is killing him. In awful dreams it has come back to me, again and again; and for days together, it has been constantly before my eyes."

And groaning aloud, he pressed his hands to his eyes, as if to shut out the remembrance of the scene, and walked up and down the room distractedly for many minutes.

Then he paused beside the mantel, and leaning heavily upon it, while his head again drooped upon his breast, he said slowly:

"If I had been capable of cool, connected thought and deliberate,

rational action, I think I would have at once confessed the deed and given myself up to justice. Perhaps my statement, unsupported by evidence as it must have been, would have been believed ; and in view of the fact that Bratton had before attempted my life, there might have been some chance for my acquittal. And yet, I could not claim that I had acted in self-defence ; for I could easily have sprung behind a tree or have fallen to the ground out of the range of his gun. At any rate, whatever the verdict against me, I could hardly have suffered more than I have done under the scourgings of memory and conscience. For my misery was intensified by having to bear it entirely alone, not daring even to let it be seen that I was wretched."

Raising his head, and again advancing towards Nora, he said passionately :

"But, Nora, I want you to know—you must believe me, that if you had not already promised to be mine before I proved myself so unworthy of you, I should never have dared to offer you this blood-stained hand. But having seen your pure soul leap out through your eyes responsively to mine, having held you to my bosom and felt your heart throb rapturously in answer to my own, I could not, my peerless darling, *I could not give you up*. With you, too, lay my only chance of happiness. Wretched as I was, tortured by remorse, and living every hour in guilty terror, the light of your smile, the music of your voice could shed over my senses a delicious intoxication that made me forget both my crime and my danger. The intense longing, the burning desire to make you entirely my own, that I might bask always in your dear presence, made me risk and dare everything.

"But even in your presence, dearest Nora, there were some terrible moments of remorse, when I remembered what a wrong I was doing you in clasping your pure heart to my guilty bosom, and linking your spotless life with that of a murderer. Then my conscience would be lulled with the sophistry, that, however dire the consequences, the act of one mad moment of passion ought not to be allowed to wreck my whole life, and that your happiness could best be secured by concealing my crime and devoting my life to you.

"But it is all over now ; I have lost you ; and without you life is of no more value to me. I have long felt as if treading on the brink of a crater ; and now I feel it crumbling beneath my feet. Let the worst come. You and Herbert were all the world to me ; and having lost your esteem and his, I care nothing for the contumely of the whole human race. Fate has done her worst with me ; for death can scarcely be worse than the only life that is possible to me. I do not feel at this moment as if I would lift my finger to save my life."

At these words, the passive despair with which she had listened so far, gave place to lively terror and passionate grief.

Springing up and wringing her hands, she besought him to fly at once, before the dread secret should be discovered, and his life put in jeopardy.

"Fly ! he repeated bitterly ; "fly to what ?—to a lonely and dreary exile, forever removed from all I know and love ! To weary years of burning remorse and quenchless sorrow ! Under some circumstances it is easier to die than to live."

"Oh ! do not talk so," she cried, floods of tears gushing from her eyes. "If you love me, dear Russell, go at once, this very night away from this miserable country. I feel sure that everything will soon be discovered ; and think of my anguish and despair should your life be made

to pay the penalty of your dreadful deed. I could not, oh ! I could not bear it. Reason or life must give way. And your poor mother—think what she must suffer in seeing you suffer. Escape while you can, for my sake and for hers.

“You are so young and strong, and life has so many possibilities ! The world is wide, and God is good. In another land you may by a long life of goodness and usefulness atone for this one mad act of youthful passion. God’s pardon will bring you peace. And oh ! Russell, seek it, pray for it day and night. Look to the cross of Christ ; for ‘the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.’ Believe him, trust in him. He loves you even better than I do ; and I would die to save you !”

He stood looking at her, every thought and feeling merged in the passionate love that beamed from his deep, sad eyes. Then he held out his arms yearningly towards her, but without advancing a step in her direction, as if not daring to touch her from a sense of unworthiness, he said,

“To go away from you, my darling, at once and forever—never, never to see you more ! O God ! O God ! My punishment is greater than I can bear.”

With a wild cry, she sprang into his embrace, twined her arms about his neck and hid her head in his bosom, murmuring between her sobs,

“Will it be worse for you than for me dearest. My life too is blighted ; my heart is breaking. Oh ! that we could now die together.”

He strained her silently to his breast ; and with his cheek laid to hers, they wept together long and passionately over the cruel destiny that was parting them forever.

It seemed that from that last, fond embrace he could never tear himself. But the sound of footsteps in the hall told that Mr. Lindsay was approaching the library ; and upon a scene so painful, a grief so bitter and so sacred, they could bear no intrusion.

With another convulsive embrace, and a shower of passionate kisses, Russell tore himself away, rushed through the parlor and across the lawn, sprang to his saddle and galloped across the fields.

Nora glided after him, closing the door behind her to avoid meeting her uncle, and crept away through the darkness to her chamber, where sinking to the floor she crouched weeping and sobbing through the long, dark hours.

When Russell reached home, he found the house dark and still. Going softly to his chamber, he sat down by the open window, baring his hot brow to the cool night air, and looking out with a stern and anxious face upon the still and solemn night scene—that pale, cold moon which has looked calmly down on so much crime and misery, those twinkling stars whose bright and changeless beauty seems to mock the fading bloom and fleeting joys of this lower world.

The worst fears with which his wounded conscience had tortured him, were fast being realized. Herbert, the pure and noble friend whose affection and esteem he had prized next to Nora Wyndham’s love, had seen him perform that foul and fiendish task, from the memory of which his own soul recoiled with overwhelming loathing and horror. Such a shock as that no friendship could survive. He felt that he could realize the shuddering pity with which Herbert had thrust him out of his heart and closed it forever against him.

And Nora, who with her delicate and sensitive spirit, her warm heart and tender conscience, her lofty ideal of human perfectibility had seen

in him all beauty and perfection and poured out upon him the richest treasures of her trusting love, now knew him as a ruined and miserable murderer. With unutterable anguish, he realized that between her pure soul and spotless life and his own guilty and miserable existence, there yawned a gulf as wide and deep as that which forever separated Dives from Lazarus.

The home he had taken so much pains to beautify for Nora's reception, was poisoned to him by a host of painful and horrid associations, which only her presence could dispel; now that she was destined never to enter it, it was become inexpressibly hateful. Its walls loomed around him like those of a prison; its air seemed to stifle him. He felt an uncontrollable impulse to fly forever from scenes which memory and conscience had made so painful. Even if Darby should drop the search for Bratton and never another word be said on the subject, he felt that he was totally ruined and undone, and that his life must be spent far away from Brantley.

But there was not the slightest chance of Darby's discontinuing the search; and on the very next day the party must pass over the spot where the mutilated remains of the murdered man lay mouldering within a few feet of the surface. Although, after the finding of the boat and hat, he had taken the precaution to renew the cedars and remove all traces of the burial from the vicinity, he felt by no means certain that the eager searching of many keen and curious eyes would not discover some clue to the fatal spot.

At the time of the murder he had thought his measures so well taken that discovery was impossible. But the scuttled boat had been dragged forth from a point where no one could have dreamed of its being disturbed; the long-lost hat had been brought to light, with its bullet-hole blabbing of murder; and his handkerchief and dirk had been picked up beside the grave. True, these last witnesses would never again appear against him; but if he had been thus careless on a former occasion, there was no telling what evidences of his crime he might have overlooked on his second visit to the grave beneath the beech-tree.

If the body should be discovered, with its pierced skull corroborating the testimony of the hat, he knew that Dick would be at once arrested. He had never for a moment intended that the negro should suffer for his fidelity to himself. Dick's arrest would be the signal for a full disclosure on the part of the real perpetrator of the crime.

He thought of the sensation such a disclosure would excite in the community, the nine days' wonder of rich and poor, high and low—of all the companions of his youth and manhood, the old men to whom from his infancy he had looked up, and the little innocent children who had looked up to him—all discussing and wondering and shuddering at the crime he had committed so quickly, so suddenly, almost without intending or knowing it.

Then he thought of himself, who, *free* as the air of heaven, had gone hither and thither, as watched and guarded. He remembered with a sickening shudder the dark bare cells of the county jail, into which, with boyish curiosity, he had once peeped through the narrow grated windows that at rare intervals pierced the thick stone walls. He thought of the prisoner's dock in the courthouse where he had often seen ignorant, dirty negroes, or low illiterate whites, arraigned for petty thefts, or brutal frays, but never one who had ever called himself a gentleman—he thought of himself as seated there—himself the gay, the confident Russell Thornton,

who had carried his head so high among his fellow-men—too high, perhaps, poor fellow, for—

“Why should the spirit of mortal be proud?” Indeed, how *can* the spirit of mortal be proud? How can creatures so weak and so wicked ever so far forget their abject and miserable condition?

And while he pictured himself on trial, he saw before him the motley and curious crowd, among which he recognized so many faces, thronging the halls of justice and pushing and jostling each other to get a sight of the prisoner, as if he were some curious wild beast.

Then his imagination overleaped the high walls of the State prison, that vast and gloomy pile frowning down from a hill beside the James, which he had once visited with a gay and thoughtless party of pleasure-seekers, who, on a lovely spring day, had sallied forth to *do* the few sights of our pretty State capital. He saw himself there, with shaven head and the coarse striped garb of the convict, bending to heavy toil beneath the watchful eye of armed guards, through the long hours of labor—or worse still, in the few hours of leisure locked into a narrow, dismal cell, or herding in loathsome contact with low, vile felons.

But a darker shadow fell around him, and a deadly chill froze the blood in his veins, as he saw the tall dark arms of a gibbet looming against the star-lit sky, and heard in the whispering night-wind the tramp of curious hundreds, flocking to witness that fearful spectacle, a judicial execution; while the awful decree sounded in his ears,

“Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed.”

Unable to suppress a groan, he sprang to his feet, throwing his arms wildly above his head in the same frantic gesture Herbert had noticed at the grave.

Heretofore, the fears and terrors that for six months had haunted him had been vague and undefined. His imagination was not naturally very active or vivid, and he had never been much given to introspection. Since his awful deed, he had exercised his energy and ingenuity to the utmost to quench thought and stifle memory. He had contrived to be rarely alone, and when this had been inevitable, he read persistently. And sometimes, when he had found it impossible otherwise to lay the ghost of Bratton, he had steeped his senses in brandy. Inebriation, the pet vice of his hated step-father, was however so revolting to him that he only resorted to it in extremity.

The present fearful crisis had forced him to study the situation thoroughly and boldly face the fearful truth.

Nora’s passionate entreaties that he would spare her the keen suffering of seeing him arrested and tried were ringing in his ears. Compunctious considerations for his mother, to whom he had already brought such sorrow, came to reinforce these pleadings. Now or never, he must fly; and so his decision was speedily taken.

He briefly wrote out the confession he had made to Nora, and directed it to Mr. Philip Morrison, who for thirty years had been the friend and legal adviser of his father and himself. A note accompanying this requested Mr. Morrison to produce the confession as soon as Dick Henderson should be arrested, so as to secure his immediate release. These papers were intrusted to Dick, though he was not informed of their contents or his master’s plans, with instructions to deliver them himself at an early hour next morning into Mr. Morrison’s hands.

Then secreting about his person a considerable sum of money which he had designed to defray the expenses of his wedding journey, and tak-

ing a change of clothing in his saddle-bags, Russell mounted his fleetest and his favorite horse, Pluto, and rode away from home, and friends, and happiness.

It was a lovely night. The moon and stars shone brightly from the blue heavens, and the dew-drops sparkled thickly on the young and tender grass.

As he rode slowly past the garden, the fresh breeze wafted to him the faint odor of violets and hyacinths; and amid the deep shadows of the lawn he heard a whippoorwill, the first of the season, sending forth a plaintive, monotonous song to lull the sleeping world.

To the end of his life, he could never afterwards hear the notes of his sombre night-bird without a sinking of the heart, nor smell the fragrance of these spring flowers without a momentary sickening of the soul.

Once out of sight of the house, he put spurs to Pluto and dashed across the fields to the public highway. But alas! fly swiftly as he might, he could not outrun

“That curse of life the demon thought.”

O Memory, when in our rash passion we hang thy galleries with pictures that the dusky wings of time cannot efface, nor rivers of tears wash out, we little dream how fearful is thy power.

When the searching party reassembled the next morning at the appointed rendezvous, much surprise was expressed at Russell's absence; but Darby explained it by saying that he had gone to Ingleside the night before and had not yet returned. His mother supposed he had been detained by Herbert's extreme illness; for some of the Brantley negroes who had wives at Ingleside, reported that Dr. Minns had been sent for at two o'clock in the night to see young Lindsay, who was supposed to be dying. This explanation being perfectly satisfactory, nothing more was said on the subject.

As soon as the party had got fully prepared, they set to work to search the Brantley side of the creek from the mouth of the stream to Darby's hedge. Here, of course, the most rigid examination brought nothing to light. Then they crossed the creek and commenced exploring the wood bordering the opposite bank. Here, too, they had proceeded nearly to the mouth of the stream without finding a trace of anything suspicious.

This was very discouraging. The novelty and excitement were wearing off; and the mere exercise of trudging through dark, damp woods, rambling through thorny thickets and tramping through treacherous marshes, being anything but delightful, the party began to find the affair growing decidedly monotonous. Signs of weariness and disgust were apparent, especially among the less polite and refined element, one of whom expressed the opinion that they were all wasting their time in a wild goose chase.” Another perpetrated a feeble joke about Jim Darby's hunting for a “mare's nest.” Presently there were heard such jocose series and responses as,

“Say Ned, found anything yet?”

“Nary sign of nothing Jack.”

“Whenever you do let me know will you?”

“Yes, if you're a livin then; if not, I'll leave word with your grand children.”

The more refined members of the party were jesting in the same strain, only in a lower tone, and better language.

"I say Duval," said Mr. Phillips, "If we find Bratton's body, I propose to send out Darby with an expedition to discover the source of the Nile."

"A good idea" was the response; "and when he has found that, he might as well go on to the north pole. Then when he's hung the stars and stripes on that end of the earth's axis, he will have done enough for geography, and so can contribute something to history by finding the remnant of the lost tribes of Israel."

"Capital plan! Or what do you say to pressing him into the service of astronomy, sending him out in a big balloon to find the lost pleiad?"

"I say he'd find it just about as soon as he'll find what he's searching for now."

These things were not lost upon Darby. He saw plainly that the affair was considered a failure, and that the failure was bringing him into contempt. His vanity was greatly tickled by the prominence recent events had given him. However, he considered that in undertaking the present search for Bratton's body, with a view to discovering the facts about the murder and bringing the perpetrators to justice, he was not only rendering a heroic tribute to friendship, but performing a valuable public service, which ought to elicit the applause of all good citizens. Seeing the zeal of others flag only increased his own, and being able to do little towards stimulating his followers, he redoubled his personal exertions. He sought ought and thoroughly explored all the deepest, darkest hollows and the densest, most tangled thickets.

As he was tramping through a cedar thicket by the old beech tree near the mouth of the creek, a broken bough caught in the leg of his pantaloons. In impatiently jerking up his leg to extricate himself, he pulled up the bush. Stooping down to disengage it, he saw that the bush had no root, and seemed to have been freshly cut and stuck into the earth. This was curious. He pulled up another bush, which also had no root—then another, and another, until he had cleared a considerable space. Brushing away the dead leaves with a broom improvised of the cedar bushes, he laid bare a large, oval spot, between five and six feet long and nearly three feet wide, which showed traces of a bluish clay that he knew must have been brought up from several feet below the surface.

"There it is, gentlemen!" he cried out; "here's David Bratton's grave at last."

At this announcement, all pressed eagerly forward and surrounded the mystic spot. At the sight of it, every face grew grave, and a solemn hush stole over the scene. In an instant, they realized the awful deed they had but half suspected; and imagination portrayed to many of them the scene of violence and horror this dark and gloomy wood had doubtless witnessed.

The negroes who had been following in the rear of the party with the shovels and spades, were now summoned to the front and set to digging. Eagerly, curiously and solemnly all stood looking on while the grave was being opened and its fearful contents brought forth. The body was in a remarkable state of preservation considering the length of time it had lain there; for the evergreen had screened the surface of the grave from every ray of sunlight, and the cold damp soil of the bottom had

maintained a low and uniform temperature. The bullet hole in the temple amply proved the manner of his death ; and the further mutilation of the body excited horrible suspicions.

Two messengers were immediately dispatched, one to summon the coroner and another to bring a physician to extract the bullet, which might be produced upon the trial. One of these horsemen galloping through the field where a gang of the Brantley negroes were hoeing corn, was hailed by them, and stopped to answer their inquiries as to whether anything had been discovered.

On learning the truth, they were greatly excited, and broke forth into such ejaculations as the following :

"He'e ! dar now, Jim Darby gwine hang somebody sure nuff."

"Lord knows I don't know nothin' 'bout it."

"Nor me neither, 'fore goodness I aint never sot eyes on Mr. Bratton not sence that mornin' 'fore he went down the river, when he was standin' in the back door a cussin' Uncle Jack 'bout lettin' the steers run away."

"Thank God, I dunno how to shoot. I never had a gun in my hand in all my born days."

"Nor I nuther. I dunno one end of the thing from tother."

Some of these remarks were directed at Dick Henderson, who had lately joined them, having just returned from Mr. Morrison's. During this tumult, he had stood quite silent, leaning on his hoe. As soon as it had subsided somewhat, he quietly remarked that he felt thirsty and believed he would go over the hill to the spring and get a drink of water. So saying, he walked away ; and that was the last seen of him for many a long day. He had not left too soon for his own comfort ; for an hour later Darby arrived with a party to arrest him.

As soon as Mrs. Bratton was informed of what had occurred, she sent a servant to Ingleside to tell Russell of it, and to desire him to return home. When the man came back and reported that his master had not been there (for only Nora knew of his visit, and she had not disclosed it,) she was much surprised, and was greatly puzzled to know where he could be.

In the meantime, when the bullet had been extracted from the skull and the coroner's verdict had been rendered, Bratton's remains were reinterred, but not in the Thornton graveyard, as Darby had suggested, for the gentlemen of the party would not consent to that, and the widow herself did not insist on it. His place of final sepulture was under a tall oak tree that stood on a hill above the creek ; and the spot had such terrors ever after for the superstitious that the kohinoor might have been safely suspended from the boughs of the lone oak.

When several days elapsed without Mrs. Bratton's receiving any tidings of her son, she was overwhelmed with terror and distress, thinking and declaring that he too had been murdered, as her husband had been. And she importuned some of the gentlemen of the neighborhood to institute a search for him.

But little suspected as the truth had been, and reluctantly as it was now believed, the real cause of his flight soon suggested itself to others. The first suspicions were considered too horrible to be credible ; but as time went on, all was brought to light. Much sympathy was felt for Russell from the first, for it was well known what he had suffered from his step-father ; and when his confession was made known, this sympathy was intensified. Horrible as they felt it to be, the impartial public, con-

sidering the provocation and the temptation, in their hearts condoned his crime ; while they acknowledged that a public trial would most probably have resulted in his incarceration in the penitentiary, if nothing worse.

Darby talked loudly of efforts to arrest the fugitive ; but from some cause, suspected but not positively known, no measures were taken to discover his whereabouts after it was positively ascertained that he had left the State.

## CHAPTER VIII.

It was September, that golden link in the seasons between the blooming summer and the fruitful autumn. The parching summer heats were over, and the early fall rains had freshened vegetation almost to the vernal tints of May. The roses were in the height of their second full blossoming, and the late summer and the early autumn flowers were in their fullest perfection. Apples, pears, peaches and grapes were still ripening in abundance, and the choicest vegetables of the year crowned the teeming table of the diligent husbandman. Corn and tobacco, in their rich maturity, clothed the fields with a growth of tropical luxuriance. And the lovely September skies! who can paint them, with their soft masses of white and pearl-gray clouds flecking the gilded hilltops and sunlit valleys with fleeting, dreamy shadows, as they float in ever varying beauty against the far off background of clear, deep and beautiful azure?

Clothed in the beauty and luxuriance of this rare season, Ingleside was very lovely; and its charms seemed especially dear to the inmates, who after a season of unparalleled gloom and distress were beginning to recover their usual tranquillity, and with it the power of observing and enjoying the beauties of nature and the good things of life.

In the midst of the budding beauty and the freshness of the glad spring time, the gloom of sickness and trouble had settled upon the household; and over it, throughout the golden summer, the angel of death had hovered, its sombre shadow athwart the threshold shutting out all the beauty and blessing of blossoms and fruits and bountiful harvests.

For many weeks Herbert's life had seemed to hang by a thread. Day after day, his uncle and aunt watched by his bedside, expecting every hour to be his last; and one night when the physicians said he could not possibly live until morning, his grave clothes had been prepared. When, at last, he did begin to amend, his recovery was so slow, and attended with so much danger of a relapse that for a long time there was no abatement of anxiety or fatigue on the part of his nurses.

Under ordinary circumstances, the sudden flight of Russell Thornton from the country, and the dark rumors to which it had given rise, would have shocked and grieved Mr. and Mrs. Lindsay intensely, and would have excited in them the liveliest sympathy for Nora and the deepest anxiety on her account. But now the sight of Herbert's suffering and the sense of his danger seemed to engross their minds almost to the exclusion of everything else. As, day after day and night after night, they stood by their nephew's sick bed, and watched his frail and wasted form battling in deadly conflict with the fell destroyer, their every interest in life seemed to centre in the desperate struggle.

They saw that Nora was utterly bowed down and miserable; and

the sight of her wretchedness could not fail to pain them greatly, absorbed though they were in Herbert; but they did not realize how sorely smitten she was, nor in what dire need of their tender and watchful attention. It is strange how much more readily human sympathy is excited by physical than by mental pain, when the latter really involves so much greater suffering. Perhaps, though, this sympathy, as manifested in the effort to relieve, is directed to the former rather than the latter because of its greater accessibility. There are febrifuges and iced draughts to cool the fire of fever, and anodynes and opiates to soothe and ease the racked nerves, but who can

—— “minister to a mind diseased,  
Pluck from the breast a rooted sorrow,  
Raze out the written troubles of the brain,  
And with some sweet oblivious antidote  
Cleanse the stuffed bosom of that perilous stuff  
That weighs upon the heart?”

Moreover, fatigue, loss of sleep and confinement to the sick room, when long continued, produce in non-professional nurses a nervous exhaustion that dulls perception and deadens sensibility. So the fond uncle and aunt failed to see that Nora's trouble was wearing her life away. Her appetite had failed utterly, and she had lost the power of deep and tranquil sleep. Her strength declined, and her flesh wasted away until she was merely a pale shadow of her former self.

But heart broken as she was and indifferent to everything else around her, she seemed keenly alive to Herbert's sufferings and danger. She had, in fact, a sort of notion that his dangerous illness had been brought on by his knowledge of Russell's crime, as it had certainly been aggravated by his hurried and fatiguing journey to Ingleside, to secure and secrete the articles whose discovery would have criminated his friend. And she felt that Herbert's death would heighten the culpability of her lover and add immeasurably to the burden of remorse his outraged conscience was compelled to bear. So she tried hard to stifle her sorrow and disguise her suffering, lest she might divert from him some of the tender and watchful attention of which he stood in such need. And weak and ill as she really was, she would assist in nursing him as long as she could stand. During his quiet intervals, she would sit beside him and fan him gently, bathe his hot brow, or moisten his parched lips with some cooling beverage; but the moment his delirious ravings commenced, she would glide out of the room, utterly unable to endure the anguish they excited.

At last the crisis was past, and the poor young man was pronounced by his physicians decidedly convalescent, though so feeble as to require unremitting attention. Then, when the terrible nervous tension under which they had all been living of late was relaxed, they began to breathe freely, to look about them and to think of themselves and each other. Then it was that Nora's appearance and condition, now for the first time clearly perceived and fully realized, filled Mr. and Mrs. Lindsay with distress and apprehension.

Dr. Minns was consulted; but his nostrums were all for bodily ailments, and could not heal a sick and suffering soul. The mild tonic he prescribed failed utterly to reach the disorder, and so she grew weaker and weaker, until she could not leave her couch at all.

And then, just as Herbert was beginning to sit up in bed, symptoms of the same dread malady that had so nearly proven fatal to him were

developed in her. The contagion which those in more robust health had been able to resist, had found her shattered system a ready prey. Perhaps, too, the fevered kisses he had pressed upon her lips in the delirious fancy that she was his mother, had breathed the poison into her system.

Nora's delirium was not violent like that of Herbert's had been. She did not seem tortured by fearful images, nor even by painful reminiscences so well defined as to admit of utterance. Her unconsciousness was so profound as to obliterate even memory. Most of the time, she lay in a death-like stupor, scarcely seeming to breathe. When she did arouse, it was only to sigh profoundly and moan piteously. Her worst symptom was her extreme weakness, the unresisting yielding of her whole system to the disease.

Even after she recovered consciousness and began to amend, for several weeks she could not raise her head from the pillow nor speak above a whisper. During this time, though she recognized her attendants and could express her wishes, her intellect and sensibilities seemed perfectly dormant. Then as her mind strengthened with her body, there came back to her, with terrible vividness after its temporary obliteration, the painful events of the past few months. For several days her countenance wore the most agonized expression, and ever and anon bitter sighs would burst from her bosom. She made no allusion to her trouble except to inquire if Russell had ever been heard from, and seemed a little relieved to learn that he had not.

These sad and restless days were followed by sleepless nights. Then the fever returned, and the relapse was even more dangerous than the first attack. However, a naturally sound constitution, careful nursing and a high order of medical skill, brought her through this too; and by the middle of September she was well enough to be lifted from her bed into a large invalid's chair by the open window, that she might be able to look out upon the world which for months had been shut out from her sight.

No one would have recognized in her the bright, beautiful creature of a few months past. She was wasted to a skeleton; her eyes were dull and hollow, her lips bloodless, her sunken cheek like parchment. A little lace cap, whose pink ribbons only exaggerated her pallor, covered her head, from which the beautiful hair had been cut away. Her pink cashmere dressing wrapper hung in folds upon her attenuated figure, which had lost all its soft, graceful lines. But the outward ruin was nothing to the inner wreck. The suffering which in an ordinary lot is diffused throughout a long lifetime, had in her case been crowded into a few months. Hope and joy seemed to be dead past all possibility of a resurrection.

She was so weak that even the slight exertion of her removal from the bed to the chair produced a deadly faintness; and for several moments she lay back in the chair with closed eyes, while her aunt bathed her temples with cologne water. Then she turned her pale face to the window, and her languid eyes wandered slowly over the fair landscape. The familiar scene awoke some sad and painful memories, for her lips quivered and her eyes filled with tears.

Seeing this, Mrs. Lindsay silently twined her arms about the frail form and pressed her lips to the wasted cheek. It nearly broke her heart to see the wreck of her darling's health and happiness. But she could do nothing to comfort her. Nora could not bear the slightest allusion to her trouble.

Mr. Lindsay entered the room with an open letter in his hand. His countenance, which was unusually bright, beamed with a delighted smile as his eye rested upon his niece. He went quickly to her chair, kissed her affectionately, and patting her cheek, said cheerfully,

"This is a pleasant sight indeed, Lady Bird, to see you sit up again and looking so well. You are looking so much stronger already, and positively there is a little flush on your cheek, my poor wilted snowdrop. Never mind, we will soon have you singing and dancing about as well and hearty as ever."

"I don't feel as if I could ever sing again," she said; "and as for dancing, I can't even raise my foot from the footstool."

"Oh! you're weak yet, of course; but you will soon strengthen. I'll have fresh oysters for you every day now; and the plantation is swarming with partridges. I'll go out this very afternoon and shoot some for you. And you must drink more wine. I'll bring up some madeira and sherry, for you must be tired of port. You'll soon come round. Herbert looked every whit as pale and thin when he first got out of bed; and he writes now that he has regained his flesh and nearly recovered his strength."

"Is that letter from Herbert?" inquired Mrs. Lindsay.

"Yes," was the reply. "He writes that the mountain air and mineral waters have restored him entirely, says he is looking and feeling as well as he ever did, only he cannot walk as much."

"Where is he now? at the White still?"

"No, he left there a week ago, and is now visiting some college friends in Staunton. He expects to go back to the seminary very soon."

"Did he say anything more about the Laniers?"

"Yes, he writes that they are now at Niagara, but will soon go to New York city, and from there will go to Washington to visit Mrs. Lanier's sister. They are coming to spend several weeks with us before they return to Louisiana, and they say they are going to take us all home with them directly after Christmas, to spend the rest of the winter in the Sunny South. What do you say to that, Nora?"

"Only that I cannot go."

"Oh! not to-day, of course. We don't propose to start just yet. But by the first of January, you'll be as strong and bright as any of us. And the southern trip will be the very thing to set you up again in spirits as well as health. The Laniers have such a beautiful home. Don't you remember, Lucy, the last visit we paid them, when Nora was just five years old. I never enjoyed myself more in my life."

"I remember something about it," said Nora, "but not much. It was in the midst of the sugar making; and the nurses used to take Paul and Marie and myself to the sugar house every morning to get the hot sugar to eat. Eloise was too young to eat much of it. And the house-keeper used to make us such nice candy. It seems to me I have never eaten any as good since."

"Let me see! That was thirteen years ago. I wonder Lucy, that we have not repeated the visit before now. They have visited us often enough."

"Oh! it's so far," said Mrs. Lindsay. "It is so fatiguing making such long journeys; and then travelling in winter is so disagreeable. Besides, we have to spend every August and September in the mountains to avoid chills and fevers; and two months out of twelve is quite enough to spend away from home. When I get back from the Springs and com-

fortably settled, I feel as if nothing in the world could allure me from Ingleside for another year at least."

"I wonder if Marie is as pretty as ever, and how Paul looks as a young gentleman," said Nora. "It has been about seven years since they were here last, I believe."

"Yes," replied her aunt, "exactly seven years in October. And it has been five years since we saw them last at the White. I daresay they have changed a good deal in that time, especially Eloise, she was so young then."

"Herbert mentioned in his first letter that Marie was very much admired," Mr. Lindsay remarked; "and he says in this that Paul is one of the most agreeable and interesting young men he has ever met. He will put us all on our mettle, he is so highly educated and so travelled. We will have to read all the books of European travel we can find, Nora, to appreciate his conversation."

"He finished his medical course in Paris; did he not?" asked Mrs. Lindsay.

"Yes, and intends to practice his profession in New Orleans, Herbert writes."

"I am very glad indeed that they are coming," said Mrs. Lindsay, "especially on Nora's account. We will all enjoy their visit, and she will be particularly interested in renewing her intercourse with her uncle's family, now that her cousins are grown up."

"I never was so much pleased at the prospect of a visit," Mr. Lindsay declared. "We've had sickness in the family so long, nobody but doctors coming to the house, every thing so dull and dismal that I feel as if I were falling into a 'green and yellow melancholy.' The visit of the Laniers will rouse us all up, and revive our spirits amazingly. Charles is a fine, jolly fellow, and has a most interesting family. The little Eloise is, or used to be, as playful as a kitten and as mischievous as a monkey."

Mr. Lindsay and his wife continued the conversation some time longer, relating anecdotes of Mr. and Mrs. Lanier, repeating incidents of their visit to Louisiana, describing the country, their journey thither, the people they had met, &c.; all of which interested Nora and diverted her thoughts from the one sad theme which occupied them, until she too began to look forward to the expected visit of her relatives with something like pleasure.

On the afternoon of the same day, Mrs. Matthews came to Ingleside to inquire after Nora's health and to bring her some partridges that Susan had caught that morning in a trap in their orchard. During a part of the summer, the old lady had been almost domesticated with the Lindseys. She had some experience in nursing, and had offered her services shortly after Herbert was taken sick; but until they were utterly worn out with their unremitting vigils, Mr. and Mrs. Lindsay would trust no one besides the hired nurse from Richmond to take their place by the sick bed. Then Mrs. Matthews' offer was thankfully accepted; and she proved a valuable assistant. Those wide staring eyes of hers never seemed to grow heavy with sleep, and they saw every motion and heard every expression of the patient, enabling her to anticipate every want and promptly to perform every needed service. During the long weeks of illness and languor, Nora had learned to love and cling to her as any sufferer will feel towards one who ministers to his wants and seeks to alleviate his pain. When her convalescence released the volunteer nurse from her

arduous duties, the patient was very unwilling to give her up, and had begged that the old lady would come often to see her.

As Nora was asleep when Mrs. Matthews arrived, Mrs. Lindsay had invited her to take a seat in the adjoining room. Here the two at once engaged in conversation; and although they spoke in a subdued tone, the sound of their voices soon reached the sleeper through the open door, and, owing to the excited condition of her nerves, at once awoke her. As she lay perfectly still, they were unaware of this, and continued speaking on a subject that neither one of them would have mentioned in her presence for worlds.

"Yes," said Mrs. Matthews, "she is certainly going away very soon. I was to see her a few days ago, and she told me so herself. She says she's had so much trouble at Brantley that she can't abide the place. Every way she looks, she says, she sees something to remind her of Mr. Bratton and Russell and all that has happened. She is often so lonesome and miserable that she can't stay in the house of days, but takes her knitting and sits under the trees, where she can see the negroes going about at their work and the little negroes playing around. They never did have much company there—at least not since Mr. Thornton's second marriage—and now not a soul ever goes near the place. At night, she says, she can't sleep for thinking of her son and for the dreadful dreams she has about him. She says if she don't get away she will lose her mind; and I do believe she will. She don't look at all natural to me now."

"Poor woman," said Mrs. Lindsay, "I can readily believe that she suffers intensely. The neighbors ought to feel more sympathy for her, and show her more attention. We have been prevented by sickness from visiting her; but I pity her sincerely, and will call on her as soon as I can leave Nora. However, she brought all this trouble upon herself by marrying Bratton. I wonder where she is going!"

"She didn't say; but of course she will go wherever Russell is; and folks think he's gone to Texas. Everybody that gets into a scrape runs off there; and so it's thought he's done the same."

"What will she do with her property? She can't sell it, for she can't make a title to it, as she has only a life interest in it."

"No, ma'am, she says she can't sell it, so she's rented it out."

"What a pity! It will all go to wreck and ruin; and Russell had put the place in such beautiful order. The poor negroes—how hard for them to have their families broken up, and to be all scattered about."

"Well, she's made a mighty good arrangement about that. You know old Mr. Thornton had a half brother that was raised at Brantley, and that lives in Baltimore now. He's rented it for his son-in-law. His daughter married a Mr. Dashiell from Virginia, and as this young man is dissipated, they want to get him out of the city, and away from the bad company he keeps there; so Mr. Beverly has leased Brantley and hired the negroes for ten years. He's bought all the stock and crops, and everything, and they will move right in without making any changes at all."

"I am very glad of that," said Mrs. Lindsay. "This arrangement will save Mrs. Bratton a world of trouble; and I am sure it will be a comfort to poor Russell to have his property in the hands of his relatives, and his slaves well cared for. Poor unfortunate young man! What a sad lot is his!"

"Yes, poor fellow!" responded Mrs. Matthews. "I never heard of

anything so dreadful. But it seems to me such a pity, his running away. Most folks think that if he had stayed here and given himself up and confessed in court what he did to Mr. Morrison, he'd have got cleared. If Mr. Bratton was trying to shoot him, his shooting first warn't so very bad—nothing more, in fact, than most anybody would have done."

"That is very true, Mrs. Matthews; but there were no witnesses to that fact—nothing to prove it but Russell's own statement; and however fully we, who know him well, might believe it, it might not have been so easy to convince a jury of its truth. The law, you know, is not sentimental, but requires other than internal evidence."

"But young Mr. Thornton had so much money to pay the lawyers, and so many warm friends to work for him."

"Yes, he has some warm friends, but he also has some very bitter enemies. Theodore Walker has always hated him, and all of Theodore's family dislike him. If he had remained, he would have been tried in Judge Walker's court; and the Judge's prejudices would have been all against him. Then there are Mr. Darby and four or five others who were Mr. Bratton's friends, that are exceedingly bitter against him. You know Darby was going to Richmond to lay the case before the Governor and get him to offer a large reward for Russell's apprehension; and it was as much as the gentlemen in the neighborhood could do to persuade him not to do so."

"Oh! yes," said the old lady, shaking her head significantly, and looking very knowing, "I've heard all about that. And folks do say that it took a big pile of money to buy Jim Darby off. It certainly looks mighty like it; for since then he's bought him two likely niggers and paid cash for them; and he's having him a new house built, and pays the hands off every Saturday night. Never was a Darby had so much money before. Tony Tucker was talking about it at my house last Sunday, and, says he, 'Jim Darby's the only man that ever made a fortune in this county by fishing, to my certain knowledge.' Well, well," with a lugubrious shake of the head, "never was a truer saying than 'it's an ill wind that blows nobody any good.' Whatever other folks may have lost by this dreadful piece of business, it's been the making of Darby. And I'll be bound he'll soon be putting on more airs than ever old Mr. Thornton did in his best days; and he was proud enough, goodness knows."

At this stage of the conversation, Mrs. Lindsay was called off to attend to some domestic duty, leaving Mrs. Matthews alone. She sat knitting several minutes in silence, when hearing a slight movement in Nora's room, she crept softly to the bedside. Finding the young lady awake, she sat down by the bed and began to tell her of Susan's exploits in making and setting a partridge trap, and the wonderful success she had met, at the same time displaying the four pretty little speckled creatures that she had brought in a covered basket. They looked so frightened that Nora, pitying their captivity, would have released them at once but for the fear of wounding the feelings of the kind donor. Mrs. Lindsay, however, was not so sentimental, but delivered them to a servant, with directions to put them in an unused parrot cage that hung in the laundry and feed them generously with wheat.

The old lady sat until quite late, relating the news of the neighborhood in a good-natured, gossipy style, that diverted the invalid a little, though she was longing all the while to hear something more of Mrs. Bratton, and to learn whether the afflicted mother acknowledged having

received any tidings of her son since his abrupt departure. But upon this subject Mrs. Matthews did not touch in the remotest manner; and Nora could not bring herself to make any inquiries, especially in the presence of her aunt. Although she herself could not bear to have the matter discussed, she had, in her great anxiety, once or twice made some inquiries respecting Russell; but her doing so seemed to alarm and distress Mrs. Lindsay so much that she felt reluctant to pain her again by any such allusions.

The next day, Nora astonished her aunt by requesting that her writing-desk might be brought to her. Mrs. Lindsay expressed the fear that she was not equal to the exertion of writing, and offered her own services as an amanuensis. This offer, however, was declined by Nora, with the remark that her aunt had already had enough trouble waiting on her, and that she was resolved now to do everything that she possibly could for herself.

Writing, however, proved a much more difficult undertaking than she could have imagined. Her grasp was so feeble and her hand so unsteady, that she found it impossible to guide the pen. The first lines were entirely illegible; and it was only after repeated efforts that she succeeded in penning a short note to Mrs. Bratton, desiring that lady to come to Ingleside to see her before her removal from Brantley. This missive she despatched privately by her own maid the same afternoon. The woman returned in a few hours with the news that Mrs. Bratton had left home the night before, had taken the boat down the river, and had told the negroes when bidding them good-bye that she never expected to see them again. The servant also said that the overseer had shown her a large box which Mrs. Bratton had directed him to send to Nora, and which he would send over the following day.

When this box was received and opened, it was found to contain a handsome portrait of Russell which had been painted a year before in New York, and the costly and beautiful ornaments he had purchased to embellish the chamber and parlors of his prospective bride.

Much to the regret and distress of the anxious aunt, who feared the effect upon her niece, Nora had the portrait hung over her mantel, and as many of the ornaments as possible placed about her chamber. And for hours together, she would sit with her head thrown back upon the cushioned chair and her hands crossed upon her lap, looking upon the proud, bright, handsome face smiling upon her, and wondering where it was now, what sort of expression it was wearing, whether it could be possible she would never see it again. She knew that with the permission of her aunt and uncle she never would. And she felt sure also that never again would Russell venture back to Virginia. Now, too, that Mrs. Bratton had gone away, she had lost her last opportunity of communicating with him.

And yet she felt that she must see him once more, or at least write to him to tell him how fondly she would always love him, how deeply she pitied him, how entirely—in view of his provocation, the fatal combination of circumstances, his remorse and suffering—her heart condoned his crime. Looking back over that last terrible meeting between them, she thought that in the horror that then convulsed her, he had read blame and condemnation, and had seen in the despair that paralyzed her coldness and scorn. The thought that one so dear to her, who was thus crushed by a freak of fortune so terribly cruel, should be made to suffer yet more acutely through her instrumentality, caused her intense anguish. She felt that she could bear all the long years of separation better if she

could but assure him of her unaltered love and entire devotion. But how was this possible? Perhaps through Herbert. He surely would not give up his dearest friend in his sore trouble and distress. No, she knew that if possible, as soon as it should be safe to make inquiries, Herbert would communicate with Russell, and seek to comfort and aid him as far as lay in his power. To her adopted brother, she resolved to appeal at the earliest opportunity; and she spent many hours in thinking what she should say to Russell, and how best she could say it, to afford the consolation she desired to render.

Very slowly and quietly the weeks went by in the still chamber of the convalescent. Friends called often, and would sit an hour or two, discussing such topics as are at the disposition of country people. Many kind notes of congratulation at her recovery were received. Nice presents of game, fruit and wine, of jellies, custards and cake, came almost daily to tempt her appetite and recruit her strength. All that love, friendship and wealth could do to comfort and restore the fair invalid was done; and slowly but surely the desired object was attained.

She had naturally a superb constitution, which had never been weakened by any previous illness. Better than all, she was young, and through everything youth will assert itself; its nascent vigor and irrepressible buoyancy will rise above the heaviest weight of woe. As her health and bodily strength came back, her mind recovered its tone; she began again to take an interest in the things she had always loved—books, flowers, pictures. But for music she had no heart. Russell was so associated in her mind with this art that she could not bear the sound of the piano or of her own voice. In drawing, reading and arranging the flowers that adorned her room, she found a pleasant occupation. Dearly loving her home and its inmates, her interest in her surroundings necessarily revived; and so her thoughts were naturally diverted from the sad subject which so long had entirely filled them.

In the material world the recuperative powers of nature are wonderful. And the capacity displayed by a plant or an animal transplanted from its habitat to adapt itself to new conditions so widely varying from those amid which it sprang into life, is still more curious. Especially is it curious to observe the changes of succeeding generations under such conditions, and to study the laws of heredity. Those fishes, for instance, which from the Green River find their way into the sunless waters of the Mammoth Cave—how curious to note in them through the various stages of propagation the gradual disappearance of every trace of the organ of vision.

But there is, perhaps, nothing in the universe so wonderful as the recuperative powers and the capacity for adaptation of the mental constitution of man. That under such a succession of calamities and bereavements as form the ordinary lot of mortals, the mind should so long retain its force and clearness, and the heart its freshness and sensibility, is truly wonderful. Any inhabitant of a better and happier world, upon being made acquainted with the vicissitudes, the fearful possibilities and the awful certainties of a human career on this sin-cursed globe, would be amazed to find such a small portion of our race in Bedlam.

Let us suppose a being acquainted only with immortal life, brought into contact with death. He sees the flashing eye grow dim and glazed, and he notes that the imploring cries of love poured into the senseless ear awake no response from the white lips, that even while warm kisses are pressed upon the marble brow and hot tears rained upon the cold cheeks,

corruption seizes upon the lordly form and transforms what was a man into a shapeless, hideous, offensive mass, which men, with shuddering horror bury out of sight. Furthermore, suppose he is assured that while centuries roll on, and moons wax and wane, and generations of men spring into being, from the mould which covers that form will issue no sound, and above it will hover no sign, but that suddenly, right there, in the dust, under the sod, in awful silence and stifling darkness, the earthly career of the man has ended forever. Suppose, too, he learns that this is the inevitable fate of all the busy, eager, merry crowds he meets in the bustling marts of the world, and that each individual, from his earliest years, has been aware of the doom awaiting him—what would he think of the reckless chase of pleasure, the eager pursuit of wealth, the mutual jealousy, envy, hardness and hatred of these doomed wretches?

He would, I dare say, think us much stranger creatures than we think the blind fishes.

Most people pronounce this a charming world, and declare ours, on the whole, a delightful existence. So much for our powers of recuperation and adaptation! So much for the laws of heredity! So much for that overmastering instinct and principle of propagation, which resists, bears down and overcomes whatever is destructive of the species. The endurance of thousands of generations has braced us to bear our burden of sin and sorrow; but what must have been the shock when it fell upon the shuddering souls of the first of the species, Adam and Eve, beings formed only for purity and happiness?

We feel sometimes that it is hard we should suffer through the sin of these remote ancestors; but let us comfort ourselves with the thought how slight are our sufferings compared to theirs. Our first father, doubtless, suffered more in his individual person than a whole generation of his posterity is capable of doing at the present day.

Nora Wyndham, with all her tenderness and sensibility, being a lineal descendant of Eve, in spite of the great sorrow which had so early darkened her life, grew gradually strong and well, serene, and even cheerful at times. Then as she became strong enough to walk about the house, and even on fine days to go out a little way in the yard or garden leaning on her uncle's arm, she felt the blessedness of returning health, and acknowledged in her soul that, with all its sorrows, the world is beautiful and life is sweet.

In November, they received a letter from the Laniers, who were then in Washington, saying that they would reach Ingleside on the 20th. Eloise added a playful postscript, in which she desired that Mr. Lindsay would have a snow storm especially for their reception. She and Marie, she said, having had their imaginations captivated by descriptions of skating and sleighing had prevailed on their parents to remain north later than they had ever done, in order that they might see something of a northern winter. If they did not have any sleighing and snow balling while in Virginia, they would be greatly disappointed.

Nora was very anxious that her cousins should be gratified in this respect; but even her short experience had taught her how very uncertain is the snow fall in tide-water Virginia, some winters passing without any at all. She eagerly consulted the weather prophets of the plantation, and was gratified to learn that there were unmistakable indications of a severe season. The yield of wild nuts and autumn berries was unusually large; and Uncle Zach had an oracular goose bone, whose excessive cloudiness seemed to betoken a snow fall equal to that of the western slope of

the Rocky Mountains. But the surest indication was the fact that the cold had set in much earlier than for several years past, very heavy frost having fallen early in October.

For several days before the arrival of the expected guests, it was cold and cloudy, and on the morning of the day which they had set for their arrival, the ground was covered with snow.

During the night the snow had fallen to the depth of eight inches, and the storm had spent itself. Although the sun was not shining, the clouds were so thin that a soft, clear light illumined the boundless expanse of spotless white. And under any light, "how beautiful is the snow!"

The lingering memories of childhood gave Nora a pleasurable sensation as she looked out over the still, pale, wintry landscape; and Mr. Lindsay was as gleeful as a school boy at the prospect of being able to gratify the young Laniers with a sleigh-ride on the first day of their visit.

The close carriage was dispatched for Mr. and Mrs. Lanier; and he drove the sleigh with his fleetest pair of horses for Paul and his sisters. Although this vehicle was a rough affair, hurriedly constructed at a country shop, it was made comfortable by thick rugs, bear skins and buffalo robes; and muffled up in a woollen comforter, under a pile of furs, Mr. Lindsay looked as cosy as Santa Claus, as he drove away from the door, the sleigh bells jingling on the frosty air.

Nora stood in the porch watching his departure. The bracing air and the anticipated visit of her young cousins had so exhilarated her that she had been jesting quite merrily with her uncle while he stood a few moments beside her, drawing on his gloves and arranging his comforter.

But as he drove away the sound of the sleigh-bells smote on her ear like a funeral knell, so forcibly did it remind her of Russell. Heretofore, a snow had always brought him to Ingleside, in his childhood to draw her on his sled or have a game of snow-balling, and later on, to take her sleighing.

Alas! it seemed that every cheerful feeling and pleasant thought was to be dashed by some painful feeling, some harrowing association. But surely, though slowly, new images and new interests were weaving a screen between the "dead past" and the "living present."

Several hours later, at the sound of the sleigh-bells, Mrs. Lindsay and Nora hastened to the front window to watch the arrival of their guests.

Almost before the sleigh stopped, an agile and graceful young man of medium height and slender figure, sprang from it. He was followed by a tall and elegant young lady and a slender and active girl of petite and fairy-like form.

As soon as Paul turned to assist his parents from the carriage, which had followed close behind the sleigh, the young ladies stooped down, and, gathering up handfuls of the snow, commenced pelting him unmercifully. He promptly retaliated in kind; and a spirited snow-balling followed. A merry challenge drew Mr. Lindsay into the mimic fray; and Mr. and Mrs. Lanier, although shivering with the cold, stood some moments on the snow, watching the combatants, and convulsed with laughter at their grotesque attitudes and wry faces when struck by the chill missiles.

When a little later, the gay young guests entered, with faces glowing with health and beaming with happiness, they seemed to bring sunshine with them.

It was mutually interesting to the cousins to note the changes five years had wrought. Nora's frail and delicate appearance greatly dis-

tressed the Laniers ; and a tender pity was mingled with the cordial affection of their greeting.

With them, time and fate had dealt more kindly. Paul, who had always been goodlooking, had developed into a remarkably handsome man. He had naturally a quick and active intelligence, and having been a good student, an extensive reader and an observant traveler, he possessed a remarkable fund of information for so young a man. Possessing, too, an enthusiastic temperament and a fine command of language, he was a most agreeable and interesting companion.

Marie was, as Herbert had said, a beautiful girl. To perfect features, she united a graceful carriage and the erect, superb-figure so common among the women of the far South—small, finely shaped hands and feet, sloping shoulders, full bust and taper waist. An abundance of silky hair, a soft, creamy complexion, large, lustrous black eyes and lips like pomegranate blossoms, completed her charms. She was not intellectual, and both her expression and manners lacked animation ; but most persons thought that her exquisite beauty and grace left nothing to be desired.

Eloise was as unlike her sister in person as in mind and manners. Her lively, restless movements and rattling talk were in strong contrast with Marie's statuesque repose and dignified taciturnity. Her hair and eyes were brown and her complexion not very fine. But although her features had not the symmetry of Marie's, a langhing light in her eyes, and an arch smile hovering about her fresh lips, rendered her face very pleasing.

Mrs. Lanier, a handsome brunette, much like her eldest daughter, had not changed at all in the last five years, except that her *embonpoint* had increased, and with it her constitutional indolence.

It had been so long since the friends met, and consequently they had so much to tell each other, that there was scarcely a moment's pause in the conversation during the first day of their visit.

Nora's thoughts, for the first time in many weary months, were borne completely away from herself and all her interests, fears, sorrows and regrets. And this so revived her depressed spirits, that she felt on retiring that night as if she had quaffed from an enchanted cup some magical elixir.

The days sped swiftly during the stay of the Laniers at Ingleside. The mornings were usually passed in the library. Here Mrs. Lanier, seated directly in front of the bright wood fire, in the most luxurious chair in the house, with her daintily shod feet resting on the softest footstool, her portly but still graceful figure clad in a rich purple morning robe, and a scarlet and white shawl wrapped around her shoulders, made a handsome central figure for the interesting group. Sometimes she coquetted with a piece of gossamer-like crocheting, which Paul laughingly compared to Penelope's embroidery, from its seeming to remain *in statu quo*. But more frequently her delicate fingers toyed with a pearl and gold paper knife ; and the latest novel lay upon her lap, though her attention was divided between that and the conversation going on around her, in which she frequently joined.

Near one window Marie sat bending over a piece of exquisite embroidery, in which beautiful feminine art she was an adept, having been educated in a convent. Nora sat near the other window drawing, and Paul leaned over her criticising and instructing. The young man had been but a few hours in the house when his keen eye noticed her portfo-

lio of drawings, and examining them with the eye of a connoisseur, he was pleased to discover evidence of decided artistic talent. He encouraged her to continue her art studies, and kindly offered to assist and instruct her while they were together. This he was well prepared to do, for he had had the best masters to be obtained before going abroad, and while in Paris had devoted every moment he could spare from his medical studies to painting in the studio of one of the best artists of that city. Nora, who had no instruction but that of a governess acquainted only with the rudiments of the art, was greatly pleased to have such an opportunity for improvement, and eagerly availed herself of his offer. Nothing could exceed the interest of this enthusiastic and art-loving couple in their morning's occupation.

Mr. Lanier generally accompanied Mr. Lindsay in his morning ride over the plantation; and sometimes Eloise made one of the party, riding Herbert's pretty mare Selene. Frequently she would attach herself to Mrs. Lindsay, who spent several hours every morning in superintending household affairs. When this merry young lady chose to join the company in the library, her favorite seat was a low ottoman at one end of the hearth, where she sometimes occupied herself in learning lace-making under her mother's tuition. More frequently, she amused herself in exercising Herbert's pointer, Carlo, in fetching, and in teaching him various tricks.

At one o'clock, Paul always took a long walk, and the ladies went driving. After dinner, they assembled in the parlor, and Marie would sing and Eloise play for the entertainment of the company. Then with whist, chest, backgammon, and conversation, that never-failing resource of Virginians, the evenings were passed pleasantly enough. Indeed, as conversationalists, the natives of the Old Dominion may claim the same position in America that the French hold in Europe. Certain it is, that in loquacity, if not in wit and tact, they rival that vivacious people who claim to have reduced conversation to a fine art.

Marie, it is true, was unusually taciturn for a woman; but without her aid the ball was kept rolling; and she was such a dazzling image of glowing health and brilliant beauty that her mere presence contributed enough to embellishing the scene. Her favorite chair was a low fantenil lined with crimson velvet. Seated in this, in an inimitable attitude, the rich folds of her dark silk falling softly around her fine form, the delicate lace shading her beautiful throat, her fair hands loosely clasped upon a gossamer-like handkerchief on her lap, the glossy braids crowning her graceful head gleaming in the lamp-light, her lustrous eyes flashing, and her red lips smiling responsively to every appealing or admiring glance, she was the very impersonation of languid grace.

Eloise, with the lightness and swiftness of a highly animated sparrow, fluttered and chirped among the company, inquiring, commenting, criticising, and teasing, at her own sweet will.

When not engaged in some game, Messrs. Lanier and Lindsay talked politics; for under the old regime it was a rare thing to find a country gentleman who knew as much about his own private affairs, or felt as much interest in them, as he did in the affairs of the nation. As for the Constitution of the United States, Chief Justice Marshall could not expound it as learnedly as the least of these self-sacrificing patriots. And as for the tariff question, and other questions of political economy, Adam Smith was in his horn-book to them. Though scarcely one in ten of them understood domestic economy well enough to make both ends meet at

Christmas, they all were sufficiently well versed in national finance to dictate the best possible method of meeting the public expenses. The most devout elder or deacon scarcely read his Bible with such attention and interest as he did the leading organ of his political party ; and beside that supreme subject—the science of government—literature, physical science and art dwindled into insignificance. Even foreign politics possessed an absorbing interest for these enthusiastic statesmen ; and the average Virginian was much more exercised about the balance of power in Europe than about his own balance at his banker's. Ah ! well, "*nous avons changé tout cela.*"

Mrs. Lindsay was never weary of listening to Mrs. Lanier's descriptions of the new winter fashions and the elegant costumes she had seen last summer at the White and during the fall and winter in New York and Washington. These, interspersed with accounts of the entertainments she had attended in these cities, and a little spicy gossip about the people she had met on these occasions and during her recent travels, furnished material for innumerable and interminable tête-à-têtes between these two of Eve's daughters.

And Paul was always beside the sofa where Nora, in the character of invalid, gracefully reclined. That an enthusiastic and slightly egotistical young man should be charmed thus to enchain the eager attention of a young, beautiful, intelligent, and sympathetic maiden, was very natural. And it was equally natural that Nora should be interested in the fluent and sometimes eloquent conversation of this animated and accomplished young man. Indeed, she had never met any one possessed of such versatile talents and such varied acquirements.

Paul took the greater delight in talking to her about his favorite art, because in this he received but little sympathy from his family. Indeed, his fondness for painting, and his eager desire to follow it as a profession, had occasioned considerable unpleasantness between him and his father, and had nearly caused an open rupture. Mr. Lanier, realizing that Paul's portion of the paternal estate would not be sufficient to maintain him in the rank and style in which he had been reared, desired him to supplement it by the practice of some profession more lucrative than painting. To law the young man had an insuperable objection ; but being fond of chemistry and biology, he finally consented to enter the medical profession. His art studies, though, had been prosecuted in conjunction with the study of medicine ; and so now he was both a pretty fair doctor and more than a respectable artist.

Shortly after his arrival at Ingleside, an unexpected legacy from a distant relative of his mother's rendered him quite independent of his father ; and he at once expressed his determination to return the next summer to Europe and devote several years entirely to the study of painting. He intended, before settling down for this purpose in Munich or Paris, to travel over the continent with Marie ; and they both invited Nora to accompany them. To this her uncle and aunt would not give their consent, being unwilling to have her risk the dangers of the sea and being appalled at the thought of such a separation. She was still so weak and languid as to feel unequal to any exertion and perfectly indifferent about the future ; and so she did not demur to the decision of her adopted parents. But Paul did his best to arouse her interest and excite in her a desire to see the wonders and beauties of the Old World by talking about and describing all that he had seen abroad, at the same time illustrating his descriptions with spirited sketches from his ready pencil.

Of course, in a community so sociable and hospitable as that surrounding Ingleside, the Laniers received many calls and made numerous visits. Mr. Lindsay would have liked to give a large dinner party in honor of his elder guests and an evening party in compliment to the younger; but in view of the recent breaking off of his niece's marriage, and the present condition of her health and spirits, this was, of course, out of the question. Therefore, he had to content himself with assembling to dine and take tea small companies of their nearest friends and relatives.

The guests, however, did not seem to feel the want of society, but entered with the greatest interest into the quiet pursuits and amusements of their hosts. And soon the approach of the Christmas holidays stirred them all with lively anticipations.

Never in merry England, with the traditional yule log and wassail bowl, the decorations of holly and mistletoe, the feasts of roast beef, fat geese and plum pudding, was this Christian festival more honored in the hearty and lively observance than it was in Virginia in the old plantation days. The negroes, being naturally deficient in forethought, and being relieved by their condition of involuntary servitude from all care about the future supply of their temporal wants, were habitually light-hearted and easily elated by any good fortune. This festival season affording them a week's holiday with a supply of unaccustomed dainties, seemed to render them wild with delight. Between these childish creatures and the white children there was so close a sympathy that the jubilation of their sable nurses and companions very naturally heightened the pleasure of the Caucasian juveniles in the good cheer and pretty gifts of this festive season.

Such an atmosphere of joyous merriment as these two classes shed around the household, could not fail to be infectious; and so the heaviest heart was wont then to feel a thrill of pleasure, and the saddest face to wear a smile.

At Ingleside, Christmas had always been celebrated in the most bountiful fashion; and now that they had with them guests whose visits were so rare, Mr. and Mrs. Lindsay had no idea of abating their usual preparations or curtailing their customary hospitality. The Harrisons were coming to spend a week, and a large party of Mr. Lindsay's kindred were expected to dine and take tea on Christmas day. Other friends and neighbors would, of course, drop in daily to dine or spend the evening; for at Christmas everybody kept open house.

The prospect of so much company and gaiety was far from agreeable to Nora. But she tried hard to disguise this from her uncle and aunt and their guests, and to stimulate an interest in their plans and anticipations.

Only one circumstance afforded her real pleasure, the prospect of again meeting Herbert, whom she had not seen for so long, except during his illness, when he either did not recognize her or was too weak to notice her presence.

The last interview between them when he had full possession of his strength and faculties, had been that dreary autumn afternoon in the library, when he had confessed his love to her and learned that it was hopeless.

Under ordinary circumstances, their first meeting after such a scene must have been embarrassing. But the terrible events which had followed, had nearly wiped out that episode from Nora's memory and greatly

softened it to Herbert. Both felt that in the mental and physical suffering through which they had passed they had almost lost their identity with their former selves. And they realized, too, that the peace and content of their future depended in a large measure on their forgetting and ignoring the past.

So when Christmas Eve, just as the lamps were lighted, Herbert walked into the parlor, and, after shaking hands with the rest of the company, went to Nora and bent over her and kissed her, as had ever been his custom after a protracted absence, she felt no emotion but pleasure at seeing him again.

He, too, seemed as composed as herself. But ever and anon, while all were absorbed in the animated conversation going on around the fire-side, he would cast an anxious glance at her pale face; and reading its tale of mute but sleepless sorrow, a look of unspeakable pity would soften his earnest eyes.

Nora several times encountered these glances, and they were as balm to her wounded spirit. And she thought, "Dear Herbert! loyal soul! truest of friends! Next to love, truly friendship is life's best boon; and that at least is left to me."

Amidst the hilarity of Christmas morning, the lively jests and merry pranks characteristic of the season, Herbert alone realized how her heart was aching with yearning and regret for one who had hitherto always shared their pleasures at this glad season. He alone saw the pitiful pain of her wan smile so soon washed away by the rush of tears to her averted eyes; for he, too, was thinking of and sorrowing for their unhappy friend. His heart bled for her; and his glance of yearning pity and sheltering love anxiously watched her every movement and expression.

But for his mute and eloquent sympathy, she could have scarcely gone through the day. As it was, the evening found her quite exhausted by the struggle to put away the sad past and feign an interest in the gay present. And when, after tea, Mrs. Lindsay took her seat at the piano and the young people commenced forming a set for the lancers, she quietly withdrew to the library, unobserved by any one but Herbert.

He followed her immediately, closed the door behind her to shut out the sound of the music and dancing, drew a sofa to the fire, and arranging the cushions on it, begged that she would lie down, saying,

"You are still too weak for the gay scenes and the gay spirits around you. I feel somewhat oppressed by so much hilarity myself."

As he sat down beside her, she was pleased to see that all the frank, brotherly kindness and affection had returned to his manner. There was not perceptible the slightest trace of the wild passion which a year ago had made him shy and uneasy in her presence.

Leaning forward and gently stroking her hand, he said,

"How severely I have blamed myself, Nora, for having returned to Ingleside with the fever on me, and giving it to you. You have suffered so much. But I did not dream of doing harm to any one, and least of all to you."

"We all know that well, Dear Herbert; and how you nearly lost your life by undertaking the journey while sick, that you might avert a possible danger from some you love. Do not imagine that any one thought for a moment of blaming you for the unforeseen consequences of your visit."

Through all her suffering, Nora had never known the consolation of talking over her griefs with any one. Although her uncle had loved

Russell and had been grieved at what had befallen him, she knew that Mr Lindsay's nature lacked the fine sensibility and passionate tenderness necessary to full sympathy with a grief like hers. And Mrs. Lindsay's pride was so wounded by the scandal of the whole thing that she could see nothing else in the affair so plainly as the disgrace of having so nearly had a murderer admitted to her immaculate family connection.

But to Herbert, Nora could pour out her heart in the full confidence of a thorough understanding and the warmest sympathy.

After a short silence, she cried,

"O Herbert, can you realize that he is a fugitive and an outcast, our own dear Russell, the companion of so many happy hours?"

"I realize it only too well," was his reply; "for his misfortunes have saddened my whole life. The world can never be the same to me again."

"Then what must it be to me?" she said. "You cannot know, no one could possibly imagine what I have suffered—what I still suffer."

"I know," he said, tenderly pressing her hand, "I feel how cruelly you have suffered; and I fear it will be long before you recover your former joyousness of spirit."

"Never, no never more!" she moaned. "Sometimes when I see the mirthfulness of these bright girls, and remember how joyous and light-hearted I too was a year ago, I can hardly believe that I am the same person and that this is the same world which was around me then. Often when I see them so merry, I feel like warning them that they are treading on a crater, which at any moment may give way and engulf them."

"Poor Russell, I wonder where he is this Christmas day, and if he is thinking of to-day a year ago. I have thought of nothing else all day. You were not with us, for you did not come home for the holidays; but you remember it snowed Christmas Eve, and the next day the ground was still covered with snow."

"We had a large company to dinner; and as soon as they left, Russell took me sleighing. It was late and we came back by moonlight. It was the first time I had ever been sleighing by moonlight; and the landscape was so beautiful. Russell enjoyed my delight as much as I did the scene. I shall never forget how happy he looked."

"Oh! it is hard to think of that bright face as clouded with trouble and sorrow, dark with fear and remorse!"

And burying her face in the sofa cushion, she wept bitterly. Herbert longed to comfort her; but he could not command his voice, and tears were streaming from his own eyes, tears of sorrow for Russell's sin and sympathy for Nora's suffering.

Presently she asked in a broken voice,

"Can you, Herbert, see any hope in the future for our poor friend, any possibility of his ever being happy in the coming years?"

"I fear, dear Nora, that there is not much happiness in this life for any of us. I am thoroughly convinced that such a thing as perfect happiness is not possible in this world."

"Yes it is," she said quickly; for I have known it."

"Well, then, lasting happiness, I will say."

"No! not lasting! Certainly not lasting in my case."

Then she exclaimed,

"Though no one can have a greater horror than I have for the deed which Russell committed in his momentary madness, yet my heart clings to him more fondly in his disgrace and misery than in his happier days."

When I think of him as an exile from home and friends, consumed by sorrow and remorse, I feel the strongest impulse to fly to him and to give to him at least the consolation of my love and life-long devotion. And it seems to me that in such a course lies my best chance for happiness; for how can I bear to live out all the days of my life away from him, ignorant even in what condition and circumstances he may be?"

"If you had already been his wife when all this happened," said Herbert, with a painful effort, "there would have been no doubt about your duty. As it is—"

"As it is," she said quickly, "I consider myself as indissolubly bound to him as if all the powers of Church and State had been invoked to make us one."

At this stage of the conversation, Mrs. Lindsay, who had been relieved at the piano by Mrs. Lanier, came in to inquire after Nora, her prolonged absence from the company having rendered the fond aunt anxious on her account. Finding that her niece was not ill, and thinking that she had rested long enough, the aunt almost compelled her return to the parlor.

The tears on Nora's cheeks and the gravity of both countenances convinced her that they had been talking about Russell. She knew that the discussion of this theme could do Nora no good and must be peculiarly painful to Herbert; and so she determined to break up the *tête-à-tête* at all hazards.

Moreover, she availed herself of the first opportunity to entreat—even to command Herbert not to talk to her niece about her disgraced and fugitive lover.

This request he was the more ready to regard, as he had found the conversation in the library that evening very embarrassing.

In her own distress, Nora seemed to have quite lost sight of the fact that Herbert had ever appeared before her in the character of a lover; but he had not forgotten it, nor was he likely to do so.

However, it so happened that he did not have another opportunity for a confidential conversation with her during his short stay of three days.

## CHAPTER IX.

On a bright day early in January, a party of travelers were gathered on the pilot-house of one of the finest "floating palaces" of our western waters, to view the incomparable scenery of the lower Mississippi. Among these were Paul Lanier and Nora Wyndham, Paul having brought his cousin to this favorable position to introduce her to the beauties of his native place, his father's plantation, Les Grands Chênes, being only a few miles further down the river.

The Mississippi being at this point comparatively straight, and its channel broad and deep, the boat, under a full head of steam, glided swiftly and smoothly in mid-stream over the glassy bosom of the majestic father of waters," between low green banks that stretched away in a level expanse as far as the eye could reach. The sugar plantations being laid off in narrow strips, to give each a river front, the eye in glancing up and down the river rested on more than a dozen estates, with the handsome residences of the planters overlooking the blue water.

These beautiful country houses, built low to the ground, with tiers of airy galleries running all around them, embowered with fine shade trees, and surrounded by extensive grounds embellished with rare shrubs and lovely flowers, were a fitting adornment to the smiling landscape. Beside each villa stood the huge sugar-house, built in some fanciful style of architecture, often a sort of semi-gothic, and bearing high on its front the name of the plantation, which also served as a brand for the sugar; and in the rear of this were the villages of cabins for the occupancy of laborers, and the various other outbuildings needed in the plantation economy.

Seldom had the scenery been viewed under more favorable aspects. The river was full of steamboats and smaller craft, floating airily over the livery water, which was unruffled by the slightest breeze. The sky, whose deep blue was reflected on the shining river, was as clear and bright as the summer skies of more northern climes, and the air was as fresh and almy as that of a May day in Virginia. The bordering levees and the smooth lawns that stretched away from them, were a vivid green; and the sunlight played caressingly among the shining leaves of the tall magnolias and the dark green foliage of the wide-spreading live oaks, with their pendent streamers of soft, grey moss.

Nora entirely agreed with her cousin, that, in spite of the absence of the grandeur and picturesqueness which give such a charm to mountain scenery, the country along the lower Mississippi is, in its bright, smiling, luxuriant beauty, perfectly enchanting. And as each mile unfolded new beauties in the brilliant panorama, her expressions of admiration and delight were sufficiently emphatic to gratify Paul's intense partiality for his native country.

There is scarcely a more delightful experience than passing rapidly

from a region where all nature lies dormant in the icy embrace of winter, where naked trees shiver in the chill blast and dead leaves crackle under the footstep, where the sun shines faintly from a cold, grey sky, and only the wailing of the wintry wind is heard in the forest, to a summer clime, where under a smiling blue sky the trees stand decked in a rich foliage, where lovely flowers unfold their delicate petals in the bright sunshine, and happy birds pour forth their sweet songs on the balmy air. To such an ardent lover of nature, such an enthusiastic worshipper of the beautiful as Nora, such an experience was particularly delightful. And the circumstance of her having been kept a prisoner in her room by sickness during the whole of the preceding summer and autumn, intensified her enjoyment of the present scene.

When the boat had stopped at the landing below the lawn at Les Grands Chênes, and the rest of the party were hurrying to the house, glad that they had reached the end of their long journey, she lingered with Paul on the lawn, admiring the massive proportions of the live oaks, so broad that a single tree looked like a clump, and a clump, like a grove. And her admiration was extended to the less majestic magnolia, with its rich, glossy foliage, and the still smaller *gloria mundi* and *crêpe myrtles* whose branches were overrun with the fragrant yellow jasmine, the golden cups of which were just opening to the caressing sunshine.

But when she mounted the three wide stone steps of the low terrace that led from the yard to the lawn, and found herself in a labyrinth of white walks, green grass-plats and smooth flower-beds, where violets, hyacinths, mountain pink, *pyrus japonica*, *spirea* and other flowers which she had been accustomed to see bloom three months later, were already in full blossom, her delight knew no bounds. But her ready admiration was still more heavily taxed when Paul led her to a magnificent clump of japonicas before the drawing-room windows, luxuriant shrubs, looking immense to her who had heretofore seen only the dwarfed and sickly specimens of the greenhouse. It seemed that she would never tire of examining and admiring the dark, shining leaves and lovely waxen flowers, some snow white, others deep red or pale pink, and yet others variegated with a beautiful blending of these several tints.

The mansion at Les Grands Chênes was very similar to most of the residences along the river, a large, low house of two stories, the first floor being only a few feet above the ground. Running all around the house were upper and lower galleries, the light, graceful pillars of which were draped with rare running roses, honeysuckles, *bignonia*, *wisteria*, &c. Upon these galleries opened numerous wide doors and large windows, leading into airy halls and large and lofty rooms. The handsome furniture and upholstery were in exquisite taste. And far more than the elegance and luxury of the surroundings, the refined and cordial hospitality of the attentive hosts contributed to the pleasure of the appreciative guests.

As soon as the bustle of their arrival had subsided, the Laniers and their Virginia friends resumed the habits and occupations that had engaged them at Ingleside. The mornings were spent in Mrs. Lanier's sitting-room, a charming apartment fronting south and looking out upon the flower-beds. The delicate tints of the rich upholstery, where scarlet and white predominated, the airy lace curtains, stands of growing flowering plants, and vases of fresh flowers disposed about the room, gave it a summer-like aspect. Lovely specimens of rare china vases, and statuettes of bronze and marble, brought from Europe by Paul, ornamented the mantel and the tables and brackets. And the walls were adorned by

some of his best paintings, pieces of Alpine and Scottish scenery. Italian landscapes, Norwegian coast scenes, and lovely female heads, among which Nora's portrait hung resplendent before she had been many weeks in the house.

In the sunniest corner of this pleasant boudoir, Paul, having had placed there the most comfortable chair in the house for his invalid cousin, resumed his art lessons and European lectures. Near them Marie, having found the best light and most suitable chair for her embroidery, went on with the beautiful tapestry, the bright flowers seeming to unfold by magic under the graceful movements of her fairy fingers. Mesdames Lindsay and Lanier, unfolding their knitting and crocheting, resumed with the monotonous knotting and looping of the bright threads, the same interminable string of gossip and of discussions of the fashions which had already amused them during the two months past.

Messrs. Lindsay and Lanier also took up their political discussion at the very point where they had left off, and went on arguing and expounding more vehemently than ever. The question of the annexation of Texas, about which they had differed, the one being a Whig, the other a Democrat, was the absorbing topic of the time. Mr. Lanier argued that its annexation to the United States must result in an expensive and bloody war with Mexico, which was far too heavy a price to pay for new territory by a country which already had such vast areas of unsettled lands. His opponent denied the probability of a war, and maintained that even in the event of the breaking out of hostilities, it would be mere child's play for the United States to conquer Mexico.

These discussions waxed so warm as the rapid progress of political events intensified the public interest in Texan affairs, that the anxious matrons who overheard so many of them, were apprehensive lest the national conflict might be preceded by a serious rupture between two individuals in whom they felt far more interest than could be aroused by any political entanglements. Paul, who felt slight interest in the subject, expecting so soon to leave the country for an indefinite period, was amused rather than alarmed at their vehemence, and slyly ridiculed their rash assertions, preposterous premises and illogical reasoning. Mary groaned and yawned under the infiction, and inwardly wished that there were no newspapers in the world.

Of the unwilling audience in the sitting-room, who dreaded to see the servant enter with the morning papers, Nora only lent a listening ear to the discussion of Texan affairs. Sharing the popular belief that Russell Thornton was now a resident of that country, its affairs possessed a peculiar interest for her. Even if his domestic and social relations had been of the happiest character, she knew that the brave, adventurous spirit, and the ardent, generous temperament of her unfortunate lover would prompt him to battle in the defence of his adopted country. As it was, baffled, disgraced, wretched and desperate as he must be, she felt that he would be among the first to rush into the conflict. In spite of the hardships and dangers of a soldier's life, she scarcely knew whether to regret this, as the stirring scenes of war must furnish such welcome diversion to one in his deplorable situation.

Actuated by these considerations, she set herself to study the political situation; and more by reading the papers and interrogating Paul than by giving ear to the violent, garrulous and decidedly irrational eloquence of her disputatious uncles, she soon mastered the main facts of the case, from the time when the heroic defence of the Alamo—the Ther-

mopylæ of American history—and the brilliant victory of San Jacinto had attracted the attention of the civilized world, down to the latest action of the American government in sending Gen. Taylor with an army to occupy salient points along the Rio Grande.

From Texan affairs, her thoughts naturally turned to Mexico, to the questions of the Aztec civilization, the Spanish conquest, the revolt and subsequent independence of the country, its career as a distinct nationality, and its present condition political, social and religious, subjects incidentally referred to by the journals that daily fell into her hands. Seeing her interest in this subject, Paul brought her from the library Prescott's "Conquest of Mexico," which she read with much pleasure during her hours of solitude.

These, however, were few. As soon as it was known in the community that the Laniers had returned home accompanied by guests, all their friends in the surrounding country and many from the city came to call on them. Receiving these visitors and returning their calls, of course, occupied a considerable part of each day.

Although Nora, in the condition of her health and the shattered state of her nervous system, which had by no means recovered its tone, felt at first a dread of meeting strangers, she found, when the first shock was over, that the sight of strange faces, the sound of strange voices, and the necessity of exerting herself to play the agreeable, were of great benefit in drawing her out of herself, by a host of fresh images and novel sensations, blurring and fading the too vivid pages of memory. With sensations of unspeakable relief, and a thrill of reviving mental strength and life, her crushed spirit began to expand under the benign influences of a complete change of scenes and surroundings, the delight of looking upon things pleasing in themselves, and suggesting by association nothing that can pain or sadden.

Amid these novel scenes and pleasant surroundings, Nora's health improved rapidly. The exercise in the open air which she was able to take in this balmy, southern climate, was especially beneficial in promoting digestion and bracing her nervous system. She greatly enjoyed the daily drives along the levee and the charming prospect they disclosed—on the one hand, the broad and level expanse of fertile and highly cultivated plantations, ornamented with handsome residences, and on the other, the far stretching, silvery surface of the majestic river, dotted with steamboats and numerous smaller craft. Very soon she grew strong enough to ride, and delighted to gallop along the smooth, level levee, fanned by the fresh river breeze, and every pulse quickened to the highest exhilaration by the delightful motion.

These pleasant rides and drives were frequently varied by charming excursions on the river. A nice boat, furnished with gay rugs and soft cushions, and manned by two stout, sable rowers, was always at their command. Often on the river they were joined by other pleasure-boats from the neighboring plantations, when a spirited rowing-match would follow. Sometimes on a warm evening Paul would take his flute into the boat, and Marie her guitar; and they would serenade their neighbors as the boat glided smoothly but swiftly along the low green banks in the deep twilight or dawning moonlight of the early evening.

But these quiet recreations only filled up the intervals between more stirring diversions. It was the gay season along the river and in the neighboring city; and dinner and tea-parties on the plantations, and the-

atres, operas and balls in New Orleans, took Paul and Marie into society three or four days out of every week.

Nora could not avoid meeting the visitors who came to her uncle's house ; but she could not be induced to go abroad into society, and, despite her aunt's coaxing and remonstrances, remained closely at Les Grands Chênes, giving ill health as a plea for her seclusion.

This was a great trial to Mrs. Lindsay, who having been a belle in her youth, and still remembering her own social triumphs with fond pride, was very desirous that her niece should have a brilliant social career. She saw that Nora's health was fast becoming reëstablished, and that with the recovery of her strength she was regaining something of her natural buoyancy of spirit.

Russell Thornton's name was never mentioned among them ; and, as amid new and pleasing scenes, the painful and humiliating past with which he was associated, was fast fading from her own memory, she imagined that her niece, too, was forgetting what had made her so miserable.

But in this she was entirely mistaken. Although, for reasons before alluded to, Nora never spoke to her uncle and aunt of her lover, he was, nevertheless, ever present to her mind, unless her attention was absorbed in reading, drawing, or the diversion of social intercourse. When alone and unoccupied, she was oppressed by the deepest melancholy, and a restless yearning to see her lover once again, to assure him of her unaltered love and fealty. And she was tortured by the conviction that Russell's sufferings had been intensified by his consciousness of her unmeasured condemnation. When she remembered her intense horror as the knowledge of his guilt dawned upon her, the terrified repulsion of her soul as his confession smote upon her ear, and called to mind how under her sternly accusing gaze, his eyes shot forth the burning anguish of his soul, while a deadly pallor overspread his face, and a spasm of pain almost stopped his breathing, she felt that she would give her very life to see him once more and efface that torturing memory from his heart. She longed to look lovingly into his eyes, and tell him how, in view of the palliating circumstances, and of his cruel fate, she condoned his almost involuntary crime—how, guilty or innocent, she loved him still, more, far more, in his disgrace and misery than in his happiness and prosperity.

But she had no hope of ever seeing him again. The most that she dared to hope for was that through Herbert she might be able some time to communicate with Russell by writing.

This she hoped to accomplish before very long ; for shortly after their arrival at Les Grands Chênes, Herbert had written them that his eyes, which had been weak ever since his illness, were so affected by study that the physician had ordered him to rest them for a month, and that he proposed to avail himself of the opportunity to visit his mother's relatives in Georgia, and perhaps might extend his travels to Louisiana. Immediately upon the receipt of this letter, the whole household had written urging him to visit Les Grands Chênes, and so they were expecting him almost daily.

One lovely sunny day, when Messrs. Lindsay and Lanier were out riding, their wives shopping in New Orleans, and Paul and Marie gone to call upon some strangers visiting in the community, as Nora was walking alone through the beautiful garden and grounds, trying to enjoy the surrounding loveliness, but oppressed by the sad thoughts which always

came to her in solitude, she saw a steamboat stop at the landing beside the lawn.

"Some visitors from the city," she thought. But as soon as she got a good view of the solitary figure coming across the lawn, she recognized Herbert, and hastened to meet him with a beaming face and both hands extended to greet him.

All the members of the household, as they returned, were delighted to find him a guest, but to no one was his visit so welcome as to Nora.

She was never lonely now, for whenever the others were away, he made it a point to remain with her. And she had never before enjoyed his society so much; for besides the similarity of their tastes, which caused them to admire and enjoy the same things, she could talk to him about Russell, and receive his tender and appreciative sympathy, a most soothing balm to her sad soul.

She very soon received his promise to visit Baltimore at the earliest opportunity, and try to get from Mr. Beverly Russell's address, that they might both write to him. This promise so comforted her that she at once became more light-hearted.

As by this time Paul and Marie were completely absorbed in the gaieties of the season, a ceaseless round of balls, parties, operas and theatre-going, she and Herbert were very often alone together. They undertook all sorts of excursions through the surrounding country and the neighboring city.

As cicerone, she took great pleasure in showing him points of interest in and about the gay Southern metropolis, so different in many of its aspects from any Northern city, particularly its wide, level streets, with their double rows of stately shade trees, the light, graceful architecture of many of its residences, and the wealth of rare and lovely shrubs adorning its yards and gardens.

Together they visited Carrolton, The Lake, Metairie Cemetery, The French Market, and other points of interest, in all of which they found much to admire. But nothing in the city so interested them as the Creole Quarter, with its narrow streets, sharp, pointed gables, wide galleries, deep arcades, and shady balconies. And they never went to town without driving down Chartres street, where the quaint and picturesque style of the buildings, and the air of repose and of mellow antiquity which seems to hover over the scene, made them imagine themselves in some other continent than this busy, bustling, brand-new America.

In the library at Les Grands Chênes, they found a number of books and pamphlets containing much curious and interesting information respecting the colonial history of this section, which Herbert would read aloud to Nora in the evenings when they were alone.

Shortly after Herbert's arrival, the approach of the Carnival excited the liveliest interest in the households of Les Grands Chênes, and the neighboring plantations, to say nothing of the feverish excitement of the gay and volatile citizens, who look forward so eagerly from year to year to the Mardi Gras pageant and the splendid balls which close the day of wild and exuberant mirth.

In this unique perpetuation in the New World of the grand festival of Catholic Europe, forming as it does such a striking and interesting feature of the social life of New Orleans, visitors are expected to manifest an appropriate degree of interest and pleasure. This expectation was entirely fulfilled in Mrs. Lindsay's case; but not all the descriptions and representations the hosts could present were able to arouse any enthusiasm

in Herbert and Nora. The gravity of his recent studies, combined with the natural seriousness of his disposition, gave him a total distaste to the whole thing; and Nora still felt out of place in any scene of gayety. Still, for the sake of the novelty, and as a matter of curiosity, they designed being present at the triumphal entry and procession of Rex.

Also, after many entreaties and much persuasion, which became most urgent and impassioned on Mrs. Lindsay's part, Nora consented to spend the night of Mardi Gras in the city and to accompany her cousins to the royal reception, even to spend an hour at the Comus ball, to inspect the artistic decorations of the hall and the handsome costumes of the company.

The same influences moved Herbert to accompany his adopted sister, not only to the palace of Rex, but even into the ball-room. Indeed, his escort was necessary, as Paul and Marie would not leave the ball until a very late hour.

For weeks, Marie's costume had been under discussion by the feminine conclave. How many times she, her mother and Mrs. Lindsay sat in council upon this momentous question, and how many visits to the city the purchase of material and the superintendence of its fabrication necessitated, it is impossible to say. It is enough to know that when it was at length completed, the result was considered ample compensation for the means expended and the time employed.

Mrs. Lindsay was anxious that Nora's dress for the occasion should vie in taste and elegance with Marie's; but her niece declined to appear in fancy costume, and stipulated that her evening dress should be as simple as possible.

Messrs. Lindsay and Lanier and their wives were content to spend the day in the city; but for the young people a suite of rooms at the St. Charles had been engaged for two days and a night.

The quiet residents of Ingleside had never in their lives witnessed a scene so gay and stirring as Canal street presented, when they had arrived there and obtained a favorable position to witness the Mardi Gras pageant. The delightfulness of the season and the loveliness of the day left nothing to be desired in the way of accessories.

The gay dresses and merry faces of the surging throng, the droll masks and grotesque figures scattered among them, the lively hum of cheerful talk and joyous laughter, possessed for these quiet country people even greater interest than the tasteful and brilliant scenic illustrations of historic subjects that gladdened the eyes of all and instructed the minds of many.

When the pageant was over, and they were wearied of passing among the merry crowd, the Laniers repaired to the hotel to dine and spend a few hours in the society of the many friends from a distance whom they met there. Then Marie went to her chamber to refresh herself by a nap in preparation for the ball, Paul withdrew to smoke, and Herbert and Nora were left alone in their private parlor to discuss the scenes and events of the day.

Marie had been an hour at the toilet when Nora repaired to her chamber to dress. Her toilet occupied but little time or attention on her part, and excited not the least interest in her breast. The hair-dresser had but a slight task in brushing and twining the glossy ringlets, which now hung a little below her shoulders. Her dress of white satin, though fitting exquisitely, was severely plain, untrimmed except by a fall of fine lace around the low corsage and short sleeves. She wore no jewels but a

necklace and bracelets of pearls, and her only floral ornament was a cluster of white japonicas worn on her bosom. Yet Herbert thought, as she entered the parlor, followed by the maid carrying her opera cloak, that he had never seen her look more beautiful.

The gorgeous decorations of the palace, the magnificent costumes of the royal party, the splendid toilets of the hundreds, yea thousands, who thronged the ball-room and the throne-room, formed a most brilliant scene.

When they had done homage to the king of the Carnival and his queen, and sufficiently admired the decorations of the palace, they repaired to the Comus ball. The dancing had commenced when they arrived, and immediately on their entrance Marie's hand was claimed for a set. Paul, who had been his sister's escort, being thus set at liberty, took Nora upon his arm to pilot her through the crowd and point out and explain to her whatever was most curious and artistic in the decorations of the hall.

The gorgeous coloring of the scene, the moving figures, the brilliant lights and stirring music, produced a pleasing excitement in Nora. From her normal condition of sadness and despondency, the reaction of a scene so exhilarating was almost intoxicating in its intensity. Her eyes sparkled, her cheeks glowed with color, her face beamed with animation and delight; and she was very beautiful. Admiring glances followed her graceful form and rested long on her beaming countenance, as in total unconsciousness of the attention she was attracting, she moved slowly forward, admiring the decorations and the most striking costumes, and listening to Paul's masterly criticism of them.

The effect of the gay and brilliant mummery on Herbert was very different. He had never felt any inclination to witness it, and had all along been very doubtful about the propriety of his appearing in the ball room, on any pretext whatever. But Mrs. Lindsay had entreated him so earnestly to go with Nora only for an hour, and Paul and the young ladies had urged his attendance as a matter of æsthetic gratification until he was won to compliance.

But the whole atmosphere of the place was distasteful to him. Far from pleasing, the scene saddened and disgusted him with its hollowness and frivolity. He was even pained to see Nora's enjoyment of it; for much as he longed to see her wounded spirit made whole, he felt that any ease such recreations might bring, would be only transient and superficial. There was, he knew, for the most grievous human ills, "balm in Gilead," but none here. As he slowly followed Paul and Nora through the surging throng, his grave, dissatisfied countenance formed a strange contrast to the wild merriment of the surrounding scene. A merry masque jocosely commented upon it, and another addressed to him a facetious query as to the cause of his apparent discontent. Realizing the absurdity of his position, he concluded he would withdraw; and having made an engagement with Paul and Nora to meet them at the end of an hour beside a certain pillar near the door, he turned and slowly made his way through the crowd, which was constantly becoming more dense. As he passed a large window near where he had parted from Nora, he observed, standing against the wall and nearly hidden by the numerous flags draped around the window, a tall figure in a black domino. But he did not observe that as soon as he turned to withdraw, this figure emerged from its partial concealment, and followed him at a little distance all through the hall down the wide stairway into the street.

He was about to step into the carriage which was waiting for him there, when a clutch on his arm startled him; and turning quickly, he saw the tall, monkish looking figure at his side. There was nothing familiar looking about it but the large, brilliant black eyes shining through the eye-holes in the mask. Almost before he could identify these, a voice instantly recognizable, in spite of the huskiness of intense agitation, addressed him:

"Walk a little way with me please, I have something to say to you."

And it was thus he had met the cherished friend of "auld lang syne" whom he had last seen turn away in horror and despair from that lone and bloody grave in the weird recesses of the dark forest beside the Chickahominy. Where mirth and joy were holding high carnial, deluding the young and thoughtless with the promise of happiness in purely worldly things, what place had one who had so fully tested the instability, the utter treacherousness of worldly pleasures and delights?

No pen can describe the emotions of the two young men, as, arm in arm, they threaded their way through the gay and merry crowd thronging the broad, brilliantly lighted street. Neither spoke, for they knew a single word must precipitate a scene not fit for the curious eyes of the many careless and indifferent spectators around them.

When they had turned down a more dimly lighted and less frequented street, and had passed from this into a dark alley shaded by the overhanging boughs of orange trees in the adjoining gardens, the tall, dark figure stopped where a single band of moonlight struggled down through an opening in the thick foliage, and raising his hand removed the mask from his face.

A pale face, the lips compressed and twitching with restrained emotion, and bright dark eyes beaming with the strangest expression of mingled affection and delight, inquiry and appeal, shame and defiance, was turned full upon Herbert, who without a word threw his arms around the tall, draped figure, drew the stately head down to his own, and kissed, again and again, the swarthy, bearded cheek over which hot tears were rolling.

"I saw her to-night, Bertie," gasped a husky voice. "I had been trying so hard to forget her. I had begun to hope that some time in the coming years, I might be able to think of her without the anguish and despair I have so long endured. But just now, when I was least thinking of her, she passed me, so near that I could have touched her; and then I found that I had not forgotten at all, can never, never forget. I thought, as she passed on, looking so bright and beautiful, and I dared not speak to her, that my heart would burst. I could scarcely keep from grasping her up and rushing away with her."

He paused, choked by emotion, then continued, with a look and tone of piteous appeal, changing suddenly to defiance, as his eye read Herbert's troubled countenance.

"I must see her again, must speak to her. You surely cannot refuse me this. I will not be refused. I will follow you until you bring me to her."

Herbert did not at once reply because he found the situation so very embarrassing. He felt that it would be exceedingly cruel to deny Russell an interview with Nora; and at the same time he knew that Mr. and Mrs. Lindsay would highly disapprove of such an interview, and would blame him for bringing it about. But above all, he dreaded the effect of a meeting with her lover on Nora herself. She was just beginning to

recover her health and spirits. The excitement of an interview with Russell, and the trial of the parting that must so soon follow, Herbert knew would completely unnerve her; and he feared it might cause her serious illness. His hesitation pained and wounded his unfortunate friend.

"Just tell me where I can find her after the ball," he said somewhat impatiently, and with a little hardness in his tone; "and then, when I have seen her once more, I will go away and never come between you again."

"It was not that," said Herbert quickly, pained and wounded in his turn. "I was not thinking of myself at all, but of her. She has suffered more than you can have any idea of. She is now recovering her strength and something of her former cheerfulness, begins to look like herself again; and I know that a meeting with you just now would completely unsettle her. Indeed I am afraid the agitation it must cause her would make her ill again. Only these considerations made me hesitate. But," he said, remembering the promise he had made to Nora, and feeling unable to resist Russell's beseeching eyes, "in spite of my apprehensions on her account, I will do what I can to gratify you. I am to go to the ball an hour from now to take her back to the hotel. I will tell her on our way there of your being in the city and requesting an interview; and if she consents to see you, I will let you know it. Perhaps you had better go with me now to the St. Charles, and wait in our private parlor until my return from the ball."

Russell threw his mask and domino over the garden wall, and walked away with Herbert to the hotel. The friends spent nearly half an hour together, during which time Russell explained to Herbert how he chanced to be in New Orleans at this time. He had joined a military company in Texas, he said, and had come to the city a few days before in company with the captain and first lieutenant to purchase the uniforms and equipments for the command. Their business having only been completed on the preceding day, his companions had prevailed on him to remain over a day to attend Mardi Gras. Their seats were taken in the stage which would leave the city a little before dawn; and he had now but a few more hours to remain in New Orleans.

While Herbert and Nora were driving away from the ball, he cautiously informed her that Russell was in the city, that he desired to see her, and was, in fact, at the St. Charles awaiting them. Notwithstanding the cautious and gradual manner in which he had made this communication, her agitation was so great as to excite his liveliest fears as to the effects of the approaching interview. As they mounted the stairs, Nora's step, although she looked so pale and trembled visibly, was so hurried that Herbert could scarcely keep pace with her.

When they stood at the threshold of the parlor, Herbert begged that she would go to her chamber until more composed, and let him send her a glass of wine. But she shook her head in refusal, and motioned him to open the door. As he obeyed, he saw Russell spring forward to meet her with outstretched hands. Nora rushed into his embrace, and Herbert quickly closed the door. Then he went away to his chamber, and sat down by the window, to await the passage of the two hours which Russell had himself allotted to the interview.

This sudden meeting with Russell had moved him deeply. And he was greatly troubled by the thought how trying it must be to Nora, how injurious to her health and spirits. He was also ill

at ease on account of the disapprobation and displeasure with which Mr. and Mrs. Lindsay would regard his agency in the affair, Nora being at this time under his charge. Anxious and perplexed, he felt faint in the close atmosphere of the warm room, and throwing up the window leaned out into the night air.

The city was ablaze with light and alive with people, gay throngs promenading the streets, laughter and song floating up to him above the tramp of hurrying feet. The air was palpitating with music; and from a large, brilliantly lighted building near by, came the measured rhythm of dancing feet.

"What a happy world!—on the outside," he murmured to himself, as his thoughts penetrated the thin wall beside him to the two heart-broken young lovers weeping there in each others arms. Then, as his thoughts dwelt upon their sad history, he remembered what Nora had said to him the past Christmas about the promptings alike of duty and inclination to share Russell's exile, and try to make up to him by her devotion what he had lost by his own mad and wicked act. Then he thought, "What if she should elope with him to-night, marry him and go away to his Texas home?"

The thing was evidently feasible, and in their love and despair what could be more natural than such a proceeding? The conception of such a possibility filled him with alarm. He could not believe that a marriage in which Nora would be forced to live in exile, away from the dear scenes of her youth, separated from all her relatives and friends, living under an assumed name, with an ever present consciousness of her husband's guilt and danger, could render her happy. And he greatly feared that it would ultimately render her miserable. Also, he knew that such a fate for their cherished niece would entail upon her devoted foster parents a keen and life-long sorrow. He dreaded to think with what grief and reprobation they would regard his conniving at such a thing. And, on the other hand, he shrank from setting himself in opposition to the wishes of Nora and Russell, and coming forcibly between them to prevent what he considered an act of madness on her part. Especially did he find this duty unpleasant in view of the fact that his former declaration of love to Nora might tempt them to think that such conduct on his part was not entirely disinterested. Harassed by these thoughts, the time dragged heavily as he sat alone waiting for the hands of his watch to point to the end of his vigil.

With Russell and Nora the hours seemed but moments, so swiftly did they fly. It is impossible to portray the complex and violent emotions that agitated their souls—the mingled transport and anguish of those two short hours, as they alternately forgot everything in the bliss of restored companionship, or remembered how soon they must part, and what was parting them.

As soon as she was sufficiently composed to talk, Nora poured into his ear the fond assurance of her condoning pity and her unchanged devotion. Then she addressed to him innumerable questions about his life since he had left Brantley, about his home, his present condition and plans for the future. And she hung with breathless attention upon his replies, showing the deepest interest in the description of the ranche and his life there, and entering with lively sympathy into the details of his opening military career. Then Russell became the interrogator; and, prompted by his inquiries, she told him of all that had lately transpired in the neighborhood of Brantley and Ingleside. Painful as were his latest associations

with these localities, he still felt the liveliest interest in the scenes and personages among which nearly all his life had been passed. With the fond, regretful yearning of the exile, his heart had turned to them in sad and tender longing during the weary months of his absence from them; and to hear all the little familiar details of matters and things there, from one who had but lately enjoyed the blessedness of a residence among these most cherished surroundings, seeming as it did to transport him to their very midst, was a source of ardent gratification.

Thus absorbed, they had not dreamed their interview so near an end, when they heard a rap on the door, Herbert's signal for its close. Both turned pale, and Nora clasped her hands tightly together in a gesture of despair, as Russell with a trembling hand drew out his watch and turned the face to the light.

Seeing that the hour for his departure had indeed come, he rose to his feet with a look of stern resolve and intense anguish, and unable to speak, held out his hand in a silent adieu. She responded with a burst of weeping, quick sobs choking her utterance, seeming, in fact, almost to stop her breathing.

He clasped her in his arms, strained her to his heart, kissed her lips, her eyes, her brow, her hair, then quickly, but gently releasing her from his embrace, rushed from the room without daring to look back. His hand was on the door knob when he heard a cry—his own name uttered in a tone of passionate love and keenest anguish.

He turned. Nora had advanced into the middle of the room, and was standing under the chandelier. The sheeny satin gleamed pale and cold in the gaslight, and the waxen flowers on her breast were not whiter than the cheek and brow above them. Her beautiful arms were outstretched beseechingly, and her fair face and sapphire eyes shone through glistening tears with passionate love and earnest pleading, as she cried,

"O, Russell, take me with you; I cannot, *cannot* live without you."

In response, he sprang towards her, his arms extended to clasp her, and his face luminous with the bliss of Paradise.

But he stopped suddenly, frozen by the Medusa touch of memory. His arms fell to his side; the light faded from his eyes; his face grew rigid with resolute purpose and stern despair.

"No," he said huskily, "I am not yet bad enough to wrong you by accepting such a sacrifice. I have caused you too much suffering already. Your happiness now lies in seeing me no more. I love you too truly ever to cross your path again. Try to forget me, dear Nora."

In another moment the door had closed upon him, and with a smothered groan she sank upon her knees, burying her face in her hands, and feeling that never again could she rise and take up the burden of life!

Herbert was waiting in the corridor for Russell, dreading to meet him lest he might announce his intention to secure Nora forever by an immediate union. But the first glance at his friend's convulsed countenance dispelled this fear. The anguish and despair so legibly written there spoke of a final parting. Never had his sympathies been so deeply moved. He grasped the cold, trembling hand Russell mutely extended to him, drew it within his arm, and walked with him in perfect silence to his hotel.

Then he assisted him in the hurried preparations for his departure, and took a seat beside him in the coach for the first stage of ten miles on his journey. At the wayside inn where they changed horses, the friends at last took leave of each other, a sad and tender parting, which left an

ineffaceable scar on the memory of both. When he returned to New Orleans, Herbert found his party about to leave for Les Grands Chênes.

Never had he seen such a sad change as the last twenty-four hours had wrought in Nora. Her form seemed bowed, her features shrunken, her eyes perfectly lustreless. Nor did he himself appear much better than Nora to the eyes of Paul and Marie. The sleepless night, the long, rough ride, the excitement and anxiety of the same period had affected him like a real illness.

Mrs. Lindsay felt the keenest interest in the Mardi Gras festivities. She had been extremely anxious for her niece's introduction to New Orleans society, and she had indulged the hope to the last that when Nora had been an hour at the ball she would become so interested as to spend the whole evening there.

When she and Mrs. Lanier drove out the morning of the following day, they met a gentleman of their acquaintance, who had remained in town to the ball and was now on his way home.

From him, they received a glowing account of the ball, accompanied by extravagant compliments to the young ladies from Les Grands Chênes. He also expressed much regret that Nora left so soon, saying that if she had only remained through the evening and joined in the dancing, she would have been the belle of the ball.

Pleased and flattered, Mrs. Lindsay began to indulge the highest hopes for her niece. Nora was recovering her health and spirits rapidly; she would soon be herself again. Everything in the world should be done to make her forget Russell Thornton. She would soon realize that in losing him she had not lost all the happiness in the world. Her aunt would take her to Newport and Saratoga the following summer; and she would spend the next winter in Richmond and Washington. She could not fail to be admired; and since she would not marry Herbert, she might yet make a very brilliant marriage.

These hopes and fancies were at once wilted by Nora's wretched appearance on her return. If a little gayety affected her so unfavorably, it was plain she was not yet equal to the rôle of a fashionable belle. Herbert, too, was looking like a ghost. "What frail, puny creatures they are! and what a dreadful thing is typhoid fever!" was Mrs. Lindsay's mental comment.

But when for days together Nora continue to keep her room, sitting for hours silent and listless, with a look of despair on her pale face, and her languid eyes so often swimming in unshed tears, Mrs. Lindsay became mystified. Then, Herbert looked so miserable and guilty whenever any allusion was made to Nora's condition that the astute aunt suspected he might be able to shed some light on the matter.

He was so perfectly transparent that a few direct questions drew all the facts of the case from him at once.

Great was the politic lady's amazement and consternation. Who could have dreamed of Russell Thornton's being in New Orleans, and in a ball room of all places! They must never meet again; and to avoid this, Nora should go to Europe with Paul and Marie, and remain a year at least. It was the very plan.

So when Paul and Marie, a little later, began to prepare for their voyage, and renewed their invitation to Nora to accompany them, they were surprised to see that Mr. and Mrs. Lindsay not only consented, but seemed anxious that she should go. Their cousin, too, instead of her former indifference, manifested a desire to make one of the party. She

was, in fact, anxious to go anywhere to avoid a return to Virginia ; for she shrank from the thought of returning to Ingleside, where everything reminded her so forcibly of the past, which it was so necessary she should forget. It refreshed her to think of visiting scenes so entirely novel that they could not possibly awaken any painful associations ; and so, with something like a renewed interest in life, she set about the preparations for her journey.

The same day that their niece and her cousins sailed for France, Mr. and Mrs. Lindsay took the train at New Orleans for their Virginia home, regretfully parting from Nora, but hoping the best results from her European tour.

## CHAPTER X.

On leaving Brantley, Russell had proceeded in a northwesterly direction towards the Rappahannock River. As his course was through a country destitute of railroads and telegraphs, and away from the usual routes of travel, he ran little risk of apprehension. Moreover, although for several days after the discovery of his flight, Darby and a few of his chums had ridden around the country in great excitement, uttering fierce threats against him, no effort was made to follow and arrest him.

So the fugitive rode unmolested across the country to a point on the Rappahannock, where, with his horse, he embarked on a steamboat for Baltimore. From that city, he proceeded to Pittsburg, Pa. Here again taking the boat, he went down the Ohio and Mississippi to New Orleans. After spending a few days in the Crescent City, he rode across the country into Texas.

Meeting on this journey with some residents of the fine old Spanish town of San Antonio de Baxar, who were returning to their homes, he was induced by their favorable representations to stay his wandering steps in that delightful locality. A few miles from town, he purchased a ranche and commenced to prepare a home for his mother, she, through Mr. Beverly, having signified her intention to join him.

Very different from Brantley was this lodge in the wilderness. The dwelling consisted of two low rooms built of logs and connected by a broad passage-way open at both ends. To this, Russell added another room and a long front piazza. A kitchen, stable and one quarter completed the establishment. A grove of China and pecan trees shaded the yard; and just beyond the garden was a small orchard of figs and peaches. These were the only trees in sight; on every hand stretched the broad rolling prairie. Immediately around the house, enclosed by a hedge of Cherokee rose, was a small field of corn and cotton; beyond that, as far as the eye could reach, waved the tall prairie-grass.

Here, until his mother's arrival, Russell lived alone with his domestics, a family of native Texans of mixed race, scarcely half civilized, and who spoke no language but Spanish, though they could understand English to a limited extent. Fortunately Russell possessed a respectable knowledge of this tongue, that being the only modern language he had studied. His choice of this language in a country where French and German are universally preferred, though Spanish is the native tongue of so large a proportion of the inhabitants of the two Americas, was due to the fact that his mother's grandparents were natives of that country, and that during his childhood he had heard her relate so many of their reminiscences of Spain that his interest had been excited in the country and the language. But although his knowledge of Spanish enabled him to communicate with his wild retinue, he found them so ignorant and stupid that their conversation could afford him no diversion whatever.

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He had no neighbors nearer than San Antonio, and even there he had no acquaintances but the companions of his late journey. He had never been very fond of reading, and even if he had been, it was impossible to obtain many books or papers. His only diversions were hunting and the witnessing of the wonderful feats of horsemanship practised by his servants. The country, swarming with game, was a veritable sportsman's paradise; and his solitary board groaned under the spoils of the chase.

He often went into San Antonio to procure supplies, and to relieve his solitude by the sights and sounds of human life. Here he was principally interested in hearing the citizens discuss the political situation of the country, the recent action of the United States Congress in admitting Texas to the Union, the probability of a war resulting, and the necessary consequences of such a war.

During the stormy period of Texan history between 1830 and 1836, this locality had been frequently the theatre of war; and the inhabitants could tell many thrilling incidents and stirring adventures of that time. Moreover, there were residing in the town some of the heroes of San Jacinto, whose spirited narrations of the scenes and incidents of that memorable occasion, possessed a thrilling interest for ardent and impetuous spirits. These stories of prowess and adventure excited in Russell a spirit of eager emulation and martial ambition, which longed for an occasion to display itself.

And so he, for the first time, became absorbed in politics, and was always at the office of the only newspaper published in the town on the very day of its issue. Even before the ink had quite dried upon the sheet, he might have been seen poring over it, so eagerly did he watch the rapid progress of events.

In November, the monotony of his lonely life was broken by a visit to New Orleans to meet his mother and conduct her to her new home. He made the journey on horseback, taking with him Pedro, the oldest son of his herdsman. In New Orleans he purchased with funds brought by his mother a negro cook, her husband, and son. To transport these and the numerous trunks and boxes Mrs. Bratton had brought from Virginia, he found it necessary to buy a wagon and team. A carriage was also procured for his mother's use. The journey of five hundred miles occupied between two and three weeks, and was a very fatiguing one to Mrs. Bratton, as they frequently camped out sleeping on cots under a tent.

It was an occasion of great satisfaction to both mother and son when they at length arrived at their home, rude as it was. Being a skillful housekeeper, Mrs. Bratton soon made many improvements in the *menage*. The books, pictures, bed-cover, table-linen, plate and china she had brought from Brantley gave to their house a familiar and home-like look that Russell had not thought it possible the log cabin could ever assume. For several weeks he and his mother were so pleased to be again together, and each of them was so interested and occupied in planning and working for the other's comfort, that they were comparatively happy.

But when all their arrangements were completed, and they had settled down to the dull routine of their lonely and isolated life, its dismal monotony began to depress the spirits of both. Mrs. Bratton never uttered a word of complaint, nor expressed the slightest regret at having given up her comfortable home and her lifelong friends, but her son could not fail to see how restless and ill at ease she felt among her strange

surroundings, and how dreary and insupportable she found this wild, lonely life.

Sometimes, too, he surprised her in tears; and the sight of her distress, with the consciousness that he was the author of it, added greatly to the load of sorrow already weighing so heavily on his heart. He began to feel that he had erred in permitting his mother to share his exile, since the sacrifice seemed to be beyond her strength; and the pain which the sight of her discontent occasioned him more than counterbalanced the pleasure of her companionship.

For some months past, throughout Texas, there had been an active recruiting going on, and many volunteer companies had been organized and equipped, and were drilling in preparation for the hour of action. In January, Capt. Nichols, who had fought under Lamar in the battle of San Jacinto, and who was the most intimate friend Russell had in Texas, set to work to raise a cavalry company. Young Thornton was among the first to enlist in it. His mother, who was terrified at the very name of war, was greatly shocked and grieved at this; but he assured her that his present life of monotony and inaction was becoming utterly unendurable, and that a military career afforded him the only possible chance of happiness and usefulness.

And when she saw how his spirits revived, how his countenance brightened, how his old buoyancy and confidence returned under the excitement of this new interest in life, she became reconciled. The equipment of the company, the election of officers, the frequent meeting for drill, the military exercises, kept him occupied and interested; and the camp stories and tales of adventure narrated by some of the command who had seen service in the late war between Texas and Mexico, afforded him a most agreeable diversion. In February, Russell, who was quite a favorite with the captain, and who had contributed very liberally to the equipment of the company, accompanied Capt. Nichols and Lieut. Bowen to New Orleans on business for the command. Shortly after his return, as they were going now regularly into camp, he broke up his household at the ranche, stored his simple furniture in San Antonio, and obtained board for his mother in Capt. Nichols' family.

Early in the spring, Capt. Nichols' company of Rangers joined Gen. Taylor's army before Matamoras. Taylor's command seemed at this time to be in a very critical situation, his small force being divided between Fort Brown and Point Isabel, while the enemy occupied a position between these two places, and also had an army at Matamoras. In scouting, foraging, and reconnoitering, the Rangers had very heavy duty to perform.

This was just what Russell Thornton, or Richard Thompson, as he had called himself since his arrival in Texas—most ardently desired. The stir and excitement of military life were most congenial to his bold and adventurous spirit. The danger only added piquancy to the charm of constant movement and variety. The superb constitution and robust health of the young athlete enabled him to triumph over hardship and fatigue. And, above all, most welcome was the diversion such a life afforded to one whose soul was tortured by remorse, and whose heart was aching for the loss of its first and only love.

As in the material world two bodies cannot occupy the same space at the same time, so in the moral world two absorbing subjects cannot occupy the same spirit at precisely the same time. Soon the incessant occupation and intense interest of his military duties drove from Russell's

thoughts the fearful memories which had so racked his soul. Only in his few moments of silence and solitude, did they recur to him, and even then the weariness of physical exhaustion greatly numbed their poignancy.

His brave and genial nature was in keen sympathy with the lively, daring spirits around him; and gradually his natural buoyancy of spirit asserted itself, and he became habitually cheerful, at times, even gay. His handsome person and fine address, his ardent and generous disposition, his splendid prowess and brilliant courage soon won for him the high regard and ardent admiration of the command. As soon as there was a vacancy, he was promoted from the rank of sergeant, which he had held from the first organization of the company, to a lieutenantancy.

In the hard fought battles of Balo Alto and Resaca de la Palma, he displayed great gallantry, and bore from these fields an honorable share of the glory shed upon the American arms by such brilliant victories. Owing to the want of water transportation, the entrance of the American army into Matamoras, on the 18th of May, was followed by a period of inaction. During this time, the Rangers were mainly occupied in foraging and scouting; and tame as these expeditions were compared to the stirring scenes of the month preceding the capture of Matamoras, Russell found much to interest him in the novel scenery of the country and the novel appearance and customs of its inhabitants. His opportunities of observing these were unusually good, as his knowledge of Spanish caused him to be often employed as an interpreter between the American soldiers and the Mexican citizens.

In common with the rest of the army, the Rangers, who were thoroughly tired out with the tedium of camp life, were much pleased to find themselves early in September on the march for Monterey. To the American officers, the grand and beautiful scenery along the route was a source of constant wonder and admiration. During the march, the Rangers formed part of the escort of the pioneers, a post of great danger and constant adventure. Here Russell's high soldierly qualities were so strikingly displayed as to attract the attention and elicit the commendation of the commander of the expedition.

During the operations before Monterey, Capt. Nichols' company had performed the most arduous duty and had frequently been hotly engaged with the enemy. But through it all, Lieut. Thompson, as he was called, had escaped both wounds and sickness. After the capture of the city, this company was placed under the orders of General Worth, whose division, composed mostly of volunteers, was quartered in the town. A few days after the occupation of Monterey our young soldier had an adventure, which, although it seemed trifling at the time, had an important bearing on his subsequent career.

Many of the volunteer companies under Worth had been enrolled in the Southern and Western cities, and were largely composed of town roughs, reckless and desperate creatures. When under the eyes of the officers on the march or in battle, these made good enough soldiers; but when they found themselves at leisure in a peaceful city, under the somewhat relaxed discipline consequent upon the fearful depletion of their several commands in the recent terrible conflict, their instincts and habits began to assert themselves, and outrages upon the inhabitants became frequent.

When returning to his quarters late one night, Russell found it necessary to pass through a part of the city, just within the walls, where the

scattered residences surrounded by large gardens and grounds, gave to each an air of isolation. These residences belonged to the better class of citizens, and nearly all of their occupants had left the city either before its investment or immediately after its fall with the Mexican army. Among them, not a light was to be seen; and throughout the quarter not a sound was to be heard but the tramp of his footsteps and the slight rattling of his sabre in its scabbard. Presently a succession of piercing screams burst upon the profound stillness. Looking in the direction of the sound, Russell perceived through the orange trees the faint glimmering of a lamp from a window about fifty yards distant. He immediately surmised that drunken stragglers from the army were committing some deed of violence, and drawing his sword, he rushed to the rescue.

The door of the house stood wide open, and following the direction of the screams, he passed through several rooms, which were in the wildest disorder—furniture overturned, trunks and drawers open, and their contents scattered over the floor.

Entering a large and handsomely furnished bed chamber, he nearly stumbled over the prostrate form of an old gentleman, who was wounded in the head and quite insensible. Three drunken American soldiers were in the room, two of them busily engaged in rifling the drawers, and the third one brutally choking a young lady to stifle her piercing and frantic cries for help.

A sabre stroke instantly felled this ruffian to the earth, when the other two rushed upon the officer. But before they had advanced many feet, a ball from his pistol disabled one of them; and seeing this, the other turned and fled precipitately. When Russell returned from a short pursuit of the fugitive, he found that he who had been felled by the sabre had revived and made his escape. The remaining one, who seemed dangerously wounded, he dragged into another room. Then he returned to the chamber to see what could be done for the wounded Mexican gentleman.

The young lady was kneeling beside him, bending fondly over the prostrate form. As Russell entered, she raised her tearful eyes to his face and said in Spanish,

"O, my poor, dear father! Will he die? Can you do anything to save him?"

The officer bent down and examined the wound. Seeing that it was not deep and perceiving that the man's breathing was good, he assured the daughter that her father's situation was not dangerous. Then asking for water and a towel, he proceeded to bath and dress the wound. At his request the lady brought some brandy, which soon revived the old gentleman.

He opened his eyes, looked around the room, then up at the officer bending over him. Instantly realizing the situation, he seized Russell's hand, exclaiming with emotion,

"Thanks! a thousand thanks, kind sir, for your gallant and generous deliverance."

Rising with difficulty and leaning on his daughter, he staggered to the bed, murmuring sadly,

"Alas! my dear wife—so frail and suffering? I fear this brutal scene has killed her."

Then for the first time, Russell perceived under the silk covering the outlines of a wasted form, and on the white pillow the thin, pallid face of a woman as ghastly and rigid as any corpse. But a closer scrutiny show-

ed that she was alive; and they all united their efforts to restore her to consciousness, she having swooned from fright. When she too had revived, the three contrived to explain to their deliverer the circumstances under which he had found them.

When their friends were leaving Monterey at the beginning of the siege, the younger lady, Donna Isabell Maréja, had refused to follow their example, because her husband was an officer in the army defending the city, and she was not willing to be separated from him in a time of such peril. Her parents, Don Fernando and Donna Maria Canales, would not leave her; and so they had all remained in the beleaguered city, confident, however, that it would make a successful resistance to the Americans, and never dreaming that they would fall into the hands of the enemy. When the city had been captured, and they again had the opportunity of going out with their vanquished army, the extreme illness of Donna Maria had prevented their doing so. Besides, Don Maréja had been captured in one of the engagements before the city, and being still a prisoner, could not give them his assistance and protection in removing.

They had suffered much from anxiety and terror during the storming of the city, but since its fall they had been comparatively comfortable and entirely unmolested until to-night. They had been abandoned by all their servants but one, who had remained closely with them, faithfully administering to their wants. By keeping the house closed and dark, and remaining closely within, they had heretofore escaped the observation of the marauders. But this afternoon, their servant had been compelled to go into town for some needed supplies, and had not yet returned. In his absence, they had neglected to close the single shutter they had found it necessary to keep open through the day, and the light shining through this had doubtless attracted the stragglers whom Russell had surprised in robbing the house.

As the servant did not return, and the ladies seemed terrified at the idea of being left alone, Russell passed the night in the house. The next morning, he reported their condition at head quarters and procured a provost guard for them. He also tried very hard to recover the money and jewels that had been stolen, but in this was unsuccessful.

Commiserating their condition—Don Canales being in feeble health and his wife still hovering between life and death, Donna Isabel's husband being still a prisoner and all of their relatives and friends too far away to help them—Russell visited them frequently and rendered them all the assistance in his power. Indeed, without his aid, they must in their forlorn condition have suffered severely. They fully realized this fact, and highly appreciated such unlookedfor kindness and generosity from one of the invaders of their country. His prepossessing appearance and winning manners, too, went far towards ingratiating him with them. The ladies, especially, soon cast aside all prejudice and reserve, and gave him their entire confidence and true friendship.

This touched the young man's heart and won his warm regard. They were indeed two lovely women, high bred, refined, gentle, amiable and affectionate. In the older lady, grace, dignity and benevolence, compensated for the loss of youthful charms, while the younger bloomed resplendent in the rich maturity of beautiful womanhood.

Since he left Virginia, Russell had been entirely cut off from female society. Sadly had he missed the graceful forms, the lovely faces, the beaming smiles, the sweet voices, the pure and kindly sentiments which

had formerly given such a charm to existence. Without the refining influence of such association, he felt himself growing daily harder and coarser. And so the society and the friendship of these noble Mexican ladies soothed and cheered him inexpressibly. Donna Isabel, too, reminded him of Nora Wyndham, although there were many points of difference between the two. They were of precisely the same height, and resembled each other in form, though the Mexican lady being older, had a fuller, more robust figure. In complexion and features, they were totally unlike; but the perfect contour of the oval face and the graceful poise of the head were identical in both. Their heads were shaped much alike, and both had wavy hair, though that of Donna Isabel was several shades darker than the Virginia maiden's chestnut curls. Between their eyes was the greatest difference imaginable, the one being a clear deep blue, the other a dark brown, not sparkling with intelligence and glowing with feeling like Nora's, but soft, tender and brilliant.

Although they belonged to hostile nations, there sprang up in a few weeks between the young American officer and this Mexican family a friendship as ardent and sincere as if they had been of the same race and intimately associated for years—so great is the power of sympathy and kindness. In the course of their acquaintance, the ladies Canales and Maréja, described to him their favorite summer residence, a hacienda situated between Saltillo and Zacatecas, and invited him to visit them there after the close of the war. This he engaged to do, but without any expectation of being able to keep his promise.

When Donna Maria was strong enough to bear removal, Russell procured a conveyance for them and escorted them with a portion of his company to the hacienda of Don Canales' brother, twenty-five miles from Monterey, on the Saltillo road. When he took leave of them there, it was with no expectation of ever meeting them again.

For some months, the troops at Monterey remained in quiet and peaceful possession of the town and surrounding the country. But early in January, the general in command at Saltillo reported that Santa Anna, with a large army, was advancing upon that place. Gen. Taylor at once sent heavy reinforcements to Saltillo to Gen. Wool's support. Russell's company was among these; and after reaching that place, they were kept constantly in the saddle, scouting through the surrounding country to discover the direction of Santa Anna's advance.

To Gen. Wool had been assigned the duty of advancing upon and occupying Chihawha; but having learned on reaching Monclava that Gen. Kearney was already in possession of Chihauha, Wool joined his forces to Gen. Taylor's command, which had been greatly depleted by reinforcements sent to Gen. Scott's army, then before Vera Cruz. Having marched across the country to Parras and thence to Saltillo, Wool's soldiers had never come in contact with the detachment occupying Monterey until Santa Anna's advance led to the massing of the American forces at Saltillo.

It had sometimes occurred to Russell Thornton, as fresh regiments of volunteers arrived at the seat of war, that he might some day meet an old acquaintance among them and be recognized. But he did not think this very probable, as he had but few acquaintances outside of his native country, and there were but few Virginians among the volunteers. Moreover, besides his change of name, there had been a very great change in his appearance within the past year. His naturally dark complexion was tanned by exposure to wind and sun until it was as tawny as any Mexi-

cans; and he had allowed his beard to grow, so that the lower part of his face was completely covered by long, thick whiskers. His slouched hat and dark green uniform completed what he considered a perfect disguise.

About the middle of February, Capt. Nichols' Rangers were ordered on a distant and dangerous scout through the country west of Saltillo. The men were in the saddle before sunrise and ready to start, when a message from the general in command required the captain to dispatch a trusty officer to head-quarters to receive some further instructions. In obedience to this order, Lieut. Thompson was sent thither.

As Russell entered the general's presence, he perceived standing before that officer a young aid-de-camp whose figure impressed him as strangely familiar. The man's back was towards him; but there was no mistaking the broad shoulders, slender waist, well rounded, shapely limbs and light curling locks of Theodore Walker. At the sound of approaching footsteps, Theodore turned and looked full at the lieutenant. Russell quickly averted his glance, immediately assuming the mask into which he could so readily cast his features, and silently making the military salute, passed on and assumed a position in which the staff officer could get only a partial view of his face.

Could he have quietly withdrawn, he might have escaped recognition; but military duty is imperative. He was compelled to speak to the general, and it would be little less than a miracle if his voice did not betray him. While he spoke, although his eyes were fixed upon the general's face, his whole attention was absorbed in watching young Walker. At the first word he uttered, he perceived Theodore's start and the keen scrutinizing gaze he fixed upon him. Without appearing to notice this, he quietly listened to the general's instructions, again saluted, and then passed quickly from the room. As he was going out at the door, he cast a backward glance at his whilom acquaintance, and encountered the aid-de-camp's fixed gaze of full and perfect recognition.

This meeting with young Walker was a great shock to Russell. The most immediate and palpable effect was the keen revival of painful associations, the vivid awakening of agonizing memories. In an instant, the veil which time, crowded with novel and changing scenes, had woven over the terrible past, was rent away, and he stood face to face with the tragic scenes he had tried so hard to forget.

Again, contact with Theodore was in itself intensely disagreeable to him. He had such a vivid conception of the hardness, narrowness, rancor and vindictiveness of the man's mean nature, and he knew so well his enmity towards himself, that the mere sight of him was irritating. Knowing and feeling that his sin and disgrace had placed him at such a fearful disadvantage, the humiliation he felt in this man's presence was intensely galling. Often in his remorse and distress he had been comforted by the thought how the loving, generous hearts of Herbert, Nora and other true friends would pity him and even condone his crime. And almost as often had he been goaded by the thought that Theodore Walker and a few others would rejoice and exult in his humiliation and misery. Thus it is with us all—in calamity and distress we are consoled and strengthened by the loving sympathy of friends, and pained and shaken by the thought of the bitter satisfaction our misery affords our enemies.

This unfortunate encounter was also fraught with serious danger to himself. He did not think Theodore would carry his enmity so far as to take any measures for his arrest and punishment; but he knew that he would write back to Virginia how and under what circumstances he had

seen him ; and he thought it probable that some of Bratton's friends, on learning of his whereabouts, might make some efforts for his apprehension.

But a more immediate danger, and what he most dreaded, was to have his dark secret divulged to his brother officers and the men of his command. To see the admiration and esteem with which these brave men regarded him changed to contempt and abhorrence, he felt would be more than he could bear. This fear so filled his heart with bitterness and despair that as he mounted his horse and dashed off to overtake his command, which was slowly filing out of the town, he silently framed the prayer that an enemy's bullet might that day put an end to his wretched existence.

It was a glorious morning. The sunshine lighted up the wonderfully crystalline atmosphere with marvellous brightness, and the air was at once bracing and balmy. It was a fine country through which the Rangers were passing, gently rolling, cleared and well cultivated, dotted with numerous villages and haciendas, and in the distance the blue mountains with their snow-capped summits towering to the skies.

Many of these haciendas, or farms, contain several thousand acres. The residence of the Administrator of the hacienda is surrounded by a high wall, and the offices and outbuildings of all sorts are clustered around it, forming almost a little village. These, with the shrubs and shade trees surrounding them, and the adjoining orange groves and orchards of pears and apricots, greatly embellish the landscape. The villages, too, with their broad plazas, slender church spires, walled convents and flat-topped white houses had a novel and picturesque appearance to the Americans from the States.

The brightness of the day and the beauty of the scene seemed to have an exhilarating effect upon the spirits of the command. But many of them noticed with surprise how faintly Lieut. Thompson responded to their jests and merry sallies, and how silent and depressed he seemed. They afterwards remembered this, and spoke of it as premonitory of what so soon followed.

As they proceeded westward, they found the cultivated fields interspersed with chaparal, and broken here and there by winding cañons, through which flowed small and rapid mountain streams. The freshness of the morning air quickly evaporated as the sun mounted high in the heavens ; and by noon the dry atmosphere of that elevated region was heated like a furnace, and clouds of an impalpable dust arose under the tread of the horses and nearly suffocated the riders. By two o'clock, both men and animals were quite exhausted ; and as they had seen no traces of the enemy and obtained no information of his being in that vicinity, the commanding officer called a halt for rest and refreshment.

They stopped at a hacienda which seemed to have been deserted in haste, probably upon the report of their approach. Here they found shelter from the burning sun, water to quench their thirst, abundance of food for their horses, and some supplies for themselves in the shape of fruits and vegetables, such as were not included in their commissariat.

At the end of an hour and a half, when they were well rested, just as the order was given for them to saddle up, the sentinels dashed in hurriedly with the intelligence that a body of Mexican cavalry was advancing.

Although if they had chosen to fight dismounted, the large building and its inclosing walls would have afforded them a strong position, yet

as this stronghold and the small adjoining fields were situated in an angle formed by a dense chaparral and a deep and narrow defile with nearly perpendicular sides, the position was considered altogether unsuitable for the manœuvring of cavalry, and of much danger in the event of their being greatly outnumbered. As the number of the enemy's force was entirely unknown, the officers determined to emerge from this *cul de sac* before meeting the Mexican charge.

This wise determination they were not able to carry out, however, as the Mexican leader had advanced so cautiously that the van of his column was close behind the American pickets. Scarcely half of the Rangers were in their saddles when the enemy burst upon them. This threw Capt. Nichols' men into a momentary confusion, a circumstance which so encouraged their foes that they fought with unusual bravery. A desperate encounter followed.

Lieut. Thompson's foot was in the stirrup when the enemy fell upon them. To spring into the saddle and rally such of his men as were already mounted was the work of an instant. At their head, he dashed forward, and fought in the front rank of the Americans. He was constitutionally brave, and had already performed many deeds of daring which had given him a brilliant reputation with the Rangers. To-day, goaded by the painful encounter of the morning, he fought with the recklessness of desperation, and wrought terrible execution among the enemy. Hard pressed as they were, many of his comrades observed, and afterwards spoke with pitying regret of his courage and prowess on that fatal day.

Exposing his person in the most reckless manner, he soon became a conspicuous mark for the enemy. For awhile the bullets rained harmlessly around him. Then a volley received at close quarters struck both him and his horse. The ball which struck Russell passed through the muscles of his left arm, and broke the large bone of his right arm a little above the wrist. Pluto received a painful wound in the flank, and another ball struck him in the eye, completely blinding him. As the bridle rein dropped from the powerless hand of the rider, the maddened animal wheeled suddenly and sped away like the wind from the line of battle towards the chaparral. But reaching that, as the terrible thorns of the Spanish bayonet tree tore his sides, he turned again and darted in the direction of the defile. The horse's speed was so great, the distance between the chaparral and the defile so short, and Russell was so stunned by the force of the ball and so maddened with pain, that he did not realize his danger until on the very brink of the precipice.

As he sprang from the saddle, the horse, feeling the shelving earth giving way beneath him, made a desperate effort to recover his footing. As he sprang into the air, his master was thrown forward over the precipice, describing a parabola in his course. The horse falling vertically through a space of a hundred feet upon a bed of rock had his neck broken and was instantly killed.

His master, falling farther forward, and more to the left, struck first the top of a tall tree. Mechanically he tried to grasp the boughs with his left hand; but his feeble, despairing clutch did not delay his descent a moment. A little lower down, he struck a branch of the tree, which deflected his course still more to the left. A few feet beyond this, his head was brought in contact with a large limb, which knocked him senseless; and then he fell as unconscious and unresisting as a stone through the crashing boughs to a bed of rushes and tall grasses beside the little stream which flowed through the defile. There he lay as motionless,

and apparently as lifeless as the faithful steed that had borne him from his far-away home beside the low, green meadows of the Chickahominy to battle for his country upon the lofty plains of Mexico.

Ah! a pitiful sight it was that crushed and bleeding form, that ghastly, rigid face with the drawn and purple lips, lying away off in that wild ravine, with the mangled horse so still and cold on one side, and a human body as still and cold lying in a cactus thicket on the other.

This corpse, cut and gashed in a fearful manner, was even a more ghastly sight than the bleeding, senseless form of the wounded soldier. It had lain there since a few hours before dawn, when an unfortunate Jew from Saltillo, scenting the approaching battle and attempting to flee with a considerable sum of money to Zacatecas, had here been set upon, robbed and murdered by one of the numerous bands of robbers with which the country was swarming. Already the vultures had plucked out its eyes and torn the ghastly face with their beaks; and more than once had they scooped down in their flight, hovering a moment over Russell's still form, as if impatient for the banquet awaiting them there.

All unconscious of the fate of his gallant charger, of the vicinity of his ghastly neighbor, and of his own danger, the wounded Ranger lay through the long hours of the afternoon. For a long time he would lie perfectly still, breathing so faintly that he seemed already dead; then a low moan or a deep groan, the contortions of his pale features and the nervous twitchings of his stiff, cold fingers would tell of the agony that racked him.

The moon came forth, and from the soft depths of the serene heavens looked placidly down upon him—the same fair moon that little more than two years before had smiled caressingly upon his face as, amid the bloom and fragrance of familiar scenes, he had held Nora Wyndham for the first time to his heart. In the intoxication of that moment, he had given the lie to all that pessimists have said of the vanity and misery of human life; for he could not believe that fate was able to inflict any suffering sufficiently acute to counter-balance such bliss.

How could he possibly know that a murderer and fugitive, hundreds of miles from home and friends, mangled and helpless, he should lie alone in that dark, wild gorge, while hungry wolves and jackals were mustering in the neighboring thicket to batten upon his writhing flesh? In this world of strange vicissitudes and fearful possibilities, how can any of us know what terrible fate may be awaiting us?

And yet, blind and impotent puppets that we are, how, in the brief hour of happiness and prosperity, do we strut and swagger and exult before the admiring and envious eyes of our fellowmen! Vanity of vanities! All is vanity!

## CHAPTER XI.

Two hours of darkness had shut in the sleeping world, and already the night wind had borne down the gorge faint sounds of the distant howlings of wild beasts, when the tramp of horses' feet were heard along the rocky margin of the stream. Very soon after, four horsemen, two of them leading horses with empty pack-saddles, drew near the spot where Russell Thornton lay.

In the moonlight, which fell in patches through the trees, it was plain to see that they were Mexicans, and it was equally evident that one was a gentleman and the others servants. One servant rode beside the master carrying a lantern, and the others followed leading the horses. All were well-mounted and well-armed.

To avoid the American cavalry, which they knew to be in this vicinity, they were following a mere bridal path along the stream, and at this point it was so narrow that the horses in passing nearly trod upon the body of the wounded Ranger. The gentleman was the first to perceive the wounded man, and he called a halt. Circumstances had made him familiar with the uniform, and his interest was immediately excited. Quickly dismounting, he took the lantern from the servant and held it a moment over the white face of the American officer.

But it was no cruel and revengeful enemy that scanned the pallid, writhing features. Don Canales' heart melted with pity as he recognized in the bloody, mangled form before him, the kind Ranger who had rendered him and his family such signal service at Monterey. He at once resolved to befriend and succor him; but how to manage this was a difficult question, and puzzled him for a moment.

Shading the lantern so that the dress of the soldier could not be seen by his followers, he stood a moment in thought before proceeding to act.

He had been to escort Don Maréja, who, having been exchanged, had been allowed a short furlough to his command, now serving under Santa Anna. The insecure state of the country, swarming with bands of marauders, who under the name of guerillas plundered both friend and foe, had rendered it necessary to take an armed escort, hence his retinue.

On the journey, in the camp, everywhere Don Canales had perceived how bitterly the Mexicans hated the Americans, how mad with rage they were at the frequent defeats they had sustained, and how determined they were, if possible, to exterminate the invaders. He had but a few hours before crossed the flying column which, after a desperate fight, had been defeated and pursued some distance by the Rangers; and his ears were still ringing with their deep curses and their fierce threats to give no quarter to Taylor's men who might fall into their hands. His own servants, too, shared the bitter, blood-thirsty hate of their countrymen; and he feared it would be as difficult to protect the American officer from his

domestics and his civilian neighbors as from the Mexican soldiers who might at any moment visit his hacienda.

While these thoughts were passing through his mind, he suddenly remembered Russell's perfect knowledge of Spanish and the tawny hue of his complexion; and he quickly resolved upon a ruse which might enable him to return to the young soldier the kindness he had received from him. Turning to his followers he said in Spanish,

"One of our poor fellows who was wounded in the fight to-day. He is badly hurt, and will most probably die; but we must not leave him to the wolves and jackals. Let us take him home and give him Christian burial at least."

After further examination of the wounded man, he resumed,

"He seems to have fallen over the precipice. Several bones are broken, and he is badly bruised. These tight clothes are hurting him; see how he writhes!" And drawing a poniard from his breast, with a few dextrous slashes he removed the dangerous uniform, then threw it into the cactus thicket near by.

"Come, Sebastiano," he said, "lend me your serapé, and we will wrap the poor fellow in it. You can well spare it, as the night is warm, and we are near home."

At his command, the men constructed a rude litter of the branches of trees tied together with the lariats that the ranchero always carries at his saddle bow. Two horses were then tied abreast by knotting together their bridal reins, and also by passing a lariat under their saddle girths and tying it firmly. Russell was then laid upon the litter, and it was carefully placed across the backs of these horses. One of the servants led the horses, and Don Canales walked beside the litter with the lantern, while the other man followed at a little distance with the led horses.

Half a mile further on, the party emerged from the cañon upon a wide plain; and then they travelled about two miles through fields of corn, sugar and pulqué, with here and there a grove or narrow forest felt of dwarfed oak and pine. This brought them to a hacienda, the long low walls of which gleamed white in the moonshine. Passing through the dark, arched gateway, they entered the patio, a large court-yard nearly square, and inclosed by the residence and the out buildings. A fountain in the centre flashed with silvery sparkles in the moonlight, and the air was laden with the faint, sweet odor of orange flowers, clustered thick amid the dark rich, foliage of the trees which there and here arose above the flower beds.

Halting the cavalcade near the entrance, Don Canales went to seek his wife and daughter and apprise them privately whom he had brought to claim their hospitality and protection. The ladies were much grieved to hear of the sorry plight of their gallant protector and eager to administer to his comfort. They recognized the necessity of concealing his nationality, and at once adopted the stratagem Don Canales had devised. This ruse was successfully maintained as long as Russell was with them; and in carrying it out, they had but one confidant and assistant, the priest, who being a kind man and a warm personal friend of the family, sympathized with them in their gratitude towards their young benefactor.

The wounded soldier was given a nice bed in one of the best chambers, and a servant was dispatched to the nearest village for a doctor. This man, though on the whole ignorant of the profession he claimed to

practice, possessed a fair knowledge of surgery, a circumstance not unusual in Mexico, where, what with the numerous encounters they have with robbers and the military operations attending the frequent revolutions, wounds and broken bones afford abundant practice to the disciples of Esculapius.

The little, withered looking, dark browed doctor shook his head and looked very grave when he had examined his patient; and, supposing him to be a gallant son of Mexico, he ground his teeth and muttered in Spanish some ugly imprecations against the hated Yankees, whom he held responsible for the mutilation of such a superb specimen of manly beauty.

Besides the wounds inflicted by the ball, he found that one leg had been broken by the fall and several ribs fractured on the same side. The body was also much bruised; and the doctor feared that serious internal injuries had been received. Long he peered and carefully he felt amid the tangled, raven locks to discover the extent of the injuries received by the head. He found no fracture there, but the concussion, he feared, might prove very dangerous.

When the wounds had been dressed, the fractures reduced, and some wine and water administered, the doctor took his leave, mingling with his adieux fearful maledictions against the Yankees.

Don Canales and his wife watched all night beside the wounded man, who lay so still and cold that they hardly expected him to live until morning. For twenty-four hours he lay thus; then reaction took place, and was followed by fever, a dangerous brain fever, which it required all the doctor's skill, and their careful nursing, all the prayers of the priest and all the vigor of the young Virginian's superb constitution to combat. Many a time they renounced all hope of his recovery; but they never discontinued their watchful care and kind attentions for one moment, however fruitless they might seem.

Their ice gardens, where by rapid radiation water was congealed in shallow dishes of pulqué leaves, furnished them with ice to apply to his hot brow. Cooling drinks of lemon and orange juice allayed his burning thirst. With large, noiseless feather fans they stirred the air around him to a grateful coolness. The long, low windows of his room looked out across a narrow portico upon the patio, where the fountain was flashing and murmuring in the midst of greenness and fragrance, where birds with rainbow tinted plumage fluttered amid the dark, green leaves and snowy flowers of the orange trees, and where myriads of gorgeous butterflies and humming birds hovered above masses of brilliant flowers.

But the unconscious sufferer saw nothing of the loveliness before him, knew nothing of the watchful tenderness beside him. In his delirium, he was singularly quiet; and, fortunately, whatever he said referring to his past life was in English, a tongue totally unknown to his kind hosts. Fortunately, too, these broken English utterances never fell upon the ear of the Yankee hating doctor or the servants, whose suspicions might have been thereby excited. The excellent Spanish they heard him speak, together with his dark complexion, were sufficient with them to affirm Don Canales statement that he was a Mexican.

Two months had passed away thus before Russell became perfectly rational. The aching from his internal injuries had ceased, the wounds had healed and the fever had subsided; but he was still as weak and helpless as an infant. He had of late had lucid intervals, during which he could describe his sensations, make known his wants, recognize and con-

verse with his kind hosts. But the faculty of memory seemed destroyed; that sense of personal identity which belongs to complete consciousness, appeared entirely lost.

At last, after several days and nights of heavy somnolency, he awoke one morning in the full possession of his mental faculties. It was just sunrise. The servant who had spent the night beside his couch, was still asleep, and the whole house was profoundly quiet.

The invalid looked about his chamber and realized the strangeness of its foreign aspect. He then glanced through the open window to the patio, where the birds were chirping and twittering among the orange boughs, where the flowers sparkled with dew drops and the fountain was flashing in the bright rays of the rising sun; and a grateful sense of the freshness and beauty without thrilled his languid frame. Then he looked into the large mirror opposite the bed, and recognizing in the bloodless face with its sharp features and hollow eyes, his own lineaments, he realized the striking change in his appearance, and began to speculate upon the cause. It was some moments before memory responded to his summons. Across a chaos of broken images, it finally led him to the encounter before the deserted hacienda, and conducted him to the fearful moment when he found himself falling over the precipice.

Then, exhausted with even this feeble mental effort, his weakened nerves succumbed to the somnolency which had lately oppressed him, and he fell into a profound slumber that lasted for hours.

As soon as he again aroused, a tempting breakfast was placed before him; and being ravenously hungry, he set to and cleared the platter, to the surprise of Donna Maria, who had had a hard time trying to tempt his dainty-and capricious appetite. When his hunger was appeased, he would fain have made some inquiries about his present situation and how he had fallen into the hands of his friends; but the exertion of eating had quite exhausted his strength, and so he was forced to rest awhile. When in answer to his inquiries his kind hostess had informed him how Don Canales had found him lying wounded and apparently dying at the foot of the precipice two months before, and how they had nursed him through this dreadful period of danger and unconsciousness, he was overcome with gratitude and affection, and wept as he had never done since that sad night of his flight from Virginia.

Convalescence from an illness so exhaustive and so nearly fatal as that of the young soldier had been, very much resembles the early stages of infancy. The mental nature is held in abeyance by the physical, which in its strong instinctive efforts at recuperation exhibits all the nascent vigor of the first period of life. To eat and sleep were the chief end of life at this period of Russell Thornton's existence. The great event of the day was dinner; and breakfast and supper were scarcely secondary in thrilling interest. If he thought of the past at all, it was of the good dinners he had eaten; and if anything like regret mingled with these reminiscences, it was for the fine dishes to which he feared he had not done full justice. If his imagination wandered into the future, it was to plan banquets at which he proposed to consume the most preposterous quantities of food as soon as he should be at liberty to indulge his palate to the full. For his prudent nurses found it necessary to restrict him in diet, and to curb the wolfish appetite which has proven fatal to so many convalescents.

Whatever interest he felt beyond this absorbing subject, was in the objects immediately before and around him. Mexican dishes and bever-

ages, Mexican fruits and flowers, Mexican houses and furniture, manners and customs, the occupations of his hosts, any information they chose to give him respecting their circumstances and personal history—all possessed for him a lively interest. Fortunately, he seemed quite borne out of and beyond himself. It was as if wearied and disgusted with his own affairs, his mind turned, without even a consciousness of so doing or anything like volition, to any exterior and foreign objects for diversion and relief.

The ladies took great delight in ministering to his comfort and in entertaining him. His interest in everything pertaining to their country and their personal affairs, was especially flattering and agreeable to them; and they became very free and unreserved in their communications. Listening to their low, musical voices, passive and simple as a child, he lay several weeks longer, while his keen digestion and nourishing food were making a torrent of fresh and healthy blood to fill his empty veins and carry energy to his palsied nerves and strength to his shrunken muscles.

Then he became strong enough to leave his bed and walk about his chamber. With the return of bodily vigor, his mind became more active and his interest in life revived. The subject which for some months before his wound had absorbed his thoughts, again began to occupy his mind; and he made eager inquiries about the military situation and what had transpired in the field since he had been *hors de combat*.

In reply to his inquiries, Don Canales informed him that a few days after the skirmish in which he had so nearly lost his life, there had been fought a terrible battle at Buena Vista, in which the Americans were victorious; that Vera Cruz had been taken and a victory won at Cerro Gordo by Gen. Scott's command; and that Gen. Kearney with a formidable army had invaded California.

All this interested him greatly, especially the news of the encounter between Gen. Taylor and Santa Anna; and he became exceedingly anxious to learn the particulars of this engagement and of the operations immediately preceding it, strongly desiring to know what part his old command had played therein.

He knew that American newspapers could be obtained in Saltillo; for through the campaign, it was the custom of the Americans as soon as they occupied a town to set up a printing press and publish a sort of army organ, or military gazette, giving the fullest possible account of army operations in Mexico, and the most important items of American and foreign news. Moreover, Saltillo and the surrounding country being now in peaceable possession of the Americans, the town had resumed its ordinary business, and the country people went and came at will. So it was not long before Don Canales' business took him to that place, and he was able to gratify Russell by bringing him a file of the American paper published in Saltillo dating back to within a few days of his leaving the camp.

Being still too weak to read much at a time, especially as his mind was not yet capable of being confined long to any subject, the reading of these papers occupied the young man many days, and afforded him much entertainment. Thirsting for the very latest news, after the hiatus in his conscious existence, he commenced with the number of most recent date and read backwards.

The brilliant successes of the American arms caused his heart to swell with proud elation, and aroused the martial ardor and burning ambi-

tion that had fired his soul previous to his calamitous accident. He chafed at the weakness of body and the tenderness of his late wounds which kept him in tame and obscure inaction while such gallant deeds were being done by others. He longed to be again in the field, bearing his part in the toils and dangers of his comrades, and reaping his share of the honors; yet he shrank from returning to his old command, who must have heard from Theodore Walker that he was living under an assumed name, a fugitive and an outlaw. He did not feel as if he could ever venture back to face such ignominy; and yet he could not think of withdrawing from the army while the war was in progress. The subject of his future filled him with anxious thought and gloomy apprehensions. His mind became restless and troubled; and his kind and attentive nurses saw with distress that his mental depression was retarding his recovery.

He had now become strong enough to walk in the patio; and often in the late afternoon and early evening, he would stroll among the flower beds or sit under the trees, enjoying the beauty and fragrance around him. As he sat under an orange tree one evening, listlessly watching the humming birds darting hither and thither amid the flowers, he heard music in the saloon. The ladies had company, and Donna Isabel had been singing for them. The sound of the guitar and of her voice, singularly like Nora's, had stirred his soul to its very depths, awakening longings and regrets that nearly maddened him. To stifle the conflict in his soul, he had walked so rapidly about the courtyard that his strength was quite exhausted. The music had long ceased, his emotion had subsided, and in a helpless inanity he sat half dreaming, half awake, just conscious that the world without him was bright and beautiful and the soul within him filled with darkness and despair.

Presently he aroused himself and drew from his pocket his last unread newspaper, an old number that had been issued a few days after he received his wound. On opening it, the first thing that met his eye was a spirited account of the action in which he had so nearly lost his life. With absorbing interest, he read of all that had followed his disappearance from the scene.

After a spirited skirmish with the van of the enemy, the Americans had succeeded in bursting through the assaulting line, and galloping to a favorable position, formed into line of battle by the time the rear of the Mexican cavalry force came into action. A fierce conflict resulted in the defeat of the Mexicans, who were driven several miles, losing many prisoners and a small battery of horse artillery. Returning after night-fall, the main body of the Americans bivouacked near the battefield, while a detachment was sent back to Saltillo with the wounded and the prisoners. The next day, a party was sent to the field of battle to bury the dead, consisting of seven privates and one officer, the gallant and lamented Lieut. Richard Thompson.

One of Lieut. Thompson's command had seen him struck in the arm by a ball and carried rapidly to the rear by his unmanageable steed; and another had seen the horse running at full speed towards the precipice. Therefore, his comrades had not been surprised, though greatly grieved, to find at the foot of the precipice, near the half consumed carcass of his faithful charges, the brave lieutenant's uniform torn and bloody, and the ghastly remnants of his body, from which the wolves and jackals had torn the greater part of the flesh. Then followed a eulogy of the dead Thomp-

son, which was read by the living Thornton with flushed cheeks and beaming eyes :

"Among the gallant spirits who have laid down their lives in the present conflict," wrote the correspondent, "the country has lost no more promising officer than Lieut. Thompson. Not one among his comrades had done better service nor performed more brilliant feats of daring. And certainly none enjoyed such a high degree of personal popularity as his genial and generous disposition had won for him among his companions in arms. In such general estimation was he held that the news of his sad fate cast a gloom over the whole camp ; and the general in command, in returning Lieut. Thompson's personal effects to his mother, sent with them an autograph letter of eulogy and condolence."

And so to the world he was dead, had died an honorable death, applauded and lamented by brave and noble men. To one who had lived two years outlawed, a disguised fugitive, with the consciousness of guilt always in his soul, and the fear of discovery ever before his eyes, there was consolation in this thought. A dead man was not amenable to the law, could not be brought to trial, condemned and executed. Justice was balked ; any idea of following him and making him suffer for his crime must now be abandoned by Darby and company. At last there was not a single soul desiring or threatening his life. It was a great relief ; he breathed more freely than for a long time. He almost felt as if he had passed from the miserable and troubled existence of the past two years into one that promised something happier and better.

Then he thought of his mother's grief—how she had wept at the sad news of his death. Must he dry her tears at any cost to himself ? Must he go back to the old life, place his head again under the sword of Damocles, to solace her woe ? "No," he thought, "she can never grieve for my death as she has grieved for my crime ; and even if she could, the worst shock is over. What she is now suffering in the belief that I have ceased to live, is not worse than what she was suffering before in dread of what was hanging over me. She will return to her home and friends and be comfortable again in her congenial surroundings. It is far better for her that she should believe me dead."

He thought of Nora—how over her grieving spirit would burst a new, wild wave of sorrow when she heard the grave had closed over him. He imagined how bitterly she would weep for him, how tenderly, but silently cherish his memory as something too sacred in its tragic sadness to be brought before the gaze of the world.

He thought too of Herbert, the dear friend who had been to him more than a brother, the rare youth, gentle and tender as a woman, brave as a lion, firm as a rock, raised by every fine feeling and honorable instinct so far above the ordinary level of mankind—he thought of the generous pity, the manly sorrow that would wring his noble heart ; and he thought how his beautiful charity would throw a veil over all that was weak and erring in the dead friend's character and life, and remember and magnify whatever there was of good. Ah ! it would be sweet to be so remembered.

And he thought too of Herbert and Nora in unison—how each would turn to the other in this mutual sorrow, feeling so sure of a perfect comprehension and sympathy. He thought of them as mingling their tears over his tomb, smoothing over his faults, lauding his virtues and dwelling with loving regret upon that part of the past which had been so bright and beautiful for them all.

Then, in the long vista of the coming years, he saw them walking

hand in hand along the journey of life, Nora's wounded heart reposing serenely, confidently upon the strong, pure and tender soul that could never bring her disappointment or sorrow. "Yes," he murmured, "for their dear sakes 'twere sweet to die. Russell Thornton has died with Richard Thompson. From their ashes may there spring a better and happier life!"

He had thought with dismay what tidings Theodore Walker might write to Virginia. It was an infinite consolation now that these tidings would only excite a generous pity and a tender regret. The old friends and neighbors, the thought of whose contumely had so wounded him, in relating his sad story to their children and grand-children, must close with the account of his honorable death. His mother would bear back to them with the tidings of his decease the kind and noble letter of the brave man whose name and deeds formed now the theme of every tongue; and such eulogy must cover much of shame and disgrace.

He felt stronger, braver, more buoyant than for many a day. While these thoughts were passing through his mind, he had been slowly pacing about the patio; but under the pleasurable excitement of the discovery of his supposed death, and the resolve to which it had led, he felt such a revival of energy and courage that, for the first time, he wandered out of the inclosure into the adjoining fields.

Through the marvellously clear air of that fine country, the trees, the hills and all distant objects were outlined with a fine distinctness as beautiful as the mingled tints of purple, rose and blue upon the distant mountains. Yes, the world was beautiful; and to the young life offered many chances. Why should he not cherish hope? Within him he felt a mighty source of will and power; around him was the wide world so full of promise; and above him was a great and merciful God. What might he not do and dare, now that he had renounced the damning past?

His reverie was broken by the sound of light footsteps. The ladies, missing him from the patio and fearing that he might overtax his strength, had come to seek him and induce him to return to the house. Their kind solicitude was very grateful to him; and his ready compliance with their slightest wishes was also equally agreeable to them. As he turned to accompany them to the hacienda, they observed with much pleasure that his countenance was more cheerful and his conversation more gay and animated than they had ever been.

His cheerfulness lasted throughout the evening. When Donna Isabel offered to sing for him, he thankfully accepted the kindness, and listened with unalloyed pleasure to the beautiful Spanish songs she sang with such skill and expression. He even took the guitar himself, and, being somewhat acquainted with that instrument, learned under her tuition a pretty little air that had pleased him. The ladies were delighted with his voice, and coaxed him into singing several English songs. It had been long indeed since he had spent such a pleasant evening.

But the next morning, he began to feel considerable anxiety on his mother's account. He knew that she had but little capacity for business; and he realized that her situation alone in that wild new country, especially in the disturbed state of affairs, was one of peculiar trial. He felt that he must make an effort to hear from her and to render her any needed assistance. Announcing to Don Canales his desire to learn some tidings of his friends in San Antonia, and consulting him as to the best means of doing so, he was informed that his host had a nephew residing there; and in his kinsman's name, he recognized an honorable and re-

responsible citizen, who was a firm supporter of the Texan cause. Through the military authorities at Saltillo, it was an easy matter to communicate with this gentleman. The matter was intrusted to Don Canales, who, at Russell's dictation, merely wrote to make inquiries as to the whereabouts and condition of Mrs. Isabel Thompson, lately residing in the family of Capt. Nichols.

In due time an answer was received, stating that early in March, Mrs. Thompson, having received the news of her son's death, had sold her Texas property and returned to Virginia.

This intelligence afforded Russell great relief. He knew that by this time his mother was safely and comfortably ensconced at Brantley, or in Richmond, surrounded by the friends and the material comforts she so highly prized, and the loss of which she had felt so keenly during her sojourn in Texas. Remembering what her life during the time of her marriage with Bratton had been, and all she had gone through since her late husband's decease, he realized that she must be happier now than for many years past, and so he dismissed all anxiety on her account.

When this matter had been disposed of, feeling now quite strong, and thinking that he had trespassed long enough upon the hospitality of his entertainers, the Ranger announced his intention to depart. But this announcement was received with consternation by the ladies, who declared that his health was still so precarious that exposure and fatigue must prove fatal to him. And so Don Canales emphatically forbade him to think of such a thing for the present.

However, during the next month, his convalescence was so rapid that there was no longer a pretext for his remaining. Seeing him resolved to go, Don Canales, with true hospitality and generosity, speeded the parting guest by providing him with a horse, clothing and money. So after an affectionate adieu, amid a shower of good wishes and pious commendations to the care of the Virgin, Russell rode away from the hacienda, where four months ago he had been received half dead and nursed back to life. The parting was a particularly sad one, as having resolved to pass for dead with his family and American friends, this Mexican family were the only friends he could claim in the world. Russell had not thought it expedient to communicate his plans to his hosts; but he promised them at the earliest practicable moment he would visit them; and he assured Don Canales that he would then claim the privilege of remunerating the generous Mexican for what he had expended on the American soldier.

Well mounted and armed, and thoroughly disguised as a Mexican, he rode leisurely northward, with a view of joining the American army, then operating in California and New Mexico.

## CHAPTER XII.

The house at Ingleside had assumed its summer garb—matting on the floors, lace curtains at the windows, pretty painted screens before the fire-places, vases of fresh flowers on the tables and mantels, and tubs and pots of green-house flowers on the porches. But the freshness and fairness within were quite eclipsed by the glowing beauty without—the vivid green of the tender grass and foliage, the soft, deep blue of the sky, the delicate tints of the wealth of blossoms embowering the venerable mansion.

Mrs. Lindsay stood at the library window, looking out upon the rare loveliness of a perfect May morning. Across the narrow strip of smooth turf, over which the perfumed breeze, stirring the leafy boughs, kept in play a bewildering maze of bright sunshine and soft shadow, lay the garden in all the glories of the floral carnival. Brilliant humming birds, many hued butterflies and myriads of honey bees were darting and flitting about the feast of nectar so bountifully spread before them, their low buzzing and humming forming a harmonious accompaniment to the songs of thrushes and mocking-birds echoing from tree and shrub.

But although it was a scene fitted to gladden the saddest heart, in beholding it the mistress of the domain could not repress a sigh; for she was thinking of the absent niece who had been wont to take such delight in the May loveliness of her home. Nora's year's absence had weighed even more heavily on her uncle and aunt than they had thought it would; and Mrs. Lindsay said she could not have endured the loneliness of the long, dreary winter but for a hopeful looking forward to the spring, when they expected her home. For some weeks past, they had been daily expecting a letter which would announce her embarkation for America; and the fond aunt and uncle had prepared every comfort their love could suggest in readiness for her arrival. But a letter lately received had caused them sore disappointment.

Turning from the window, Mrs. Lindsay took this letter from her writing desk, read it carefully, then sighed again as she refolded it, and sitting down by the window, took a piece of cambric from the drawer of her work-stand and began to sew industriously.

She had not long been thus occupied when her solitude was relieved by the arrival of Mrs. Matthews. After some extravagant expressions of admiration of the scene before the windows, for she dearly loved flowers, and considered the garden at Ingleside only second to the garden of Eden, the old lady announced the occasion of her visit. The warp, she said, had run out more than she expected, and she wanted several pounds more of filling to finish the cloth she was weaving for the little negroes' summer dresses. When Mrs. Lindsay had promised to send the thread to her in the afternoon, she inquired:

“When did you hear from Miss Nora? and how is she?”

"We have just received a long letter from her, and she wrote that her health was very good indeed."

"Where is she now?"

"Her letter was dated from London."

"Oh! yes, that's where the British come from, Lord Cornwallis, and Tarleton and all them dreadful red-coats that my grandmother used to talk about so much. Good gracious! how her old war stories used to scare me when I was a little girl. I don't think I would like to trust myself among them people. But I've heard it's a mighty fine country, and the Queen's palace the grandest place that ever was seen. I suppose Miss Nora will see it and be able to tell us all how it looks."

"Oh, yes, she will see whatever is worth seeing in the country before she leaves."

"Well, I wonder she don't get tired of wandering about in furrin parts, when she's got such a pretty home to come to. Don't she speak of coming back soon?"

"Not before the fall."

"Now that is too bad! I certainly counted on seeing her before July. I don't see how you and the colonel can stand staying here all by yourselves so long. But I suppose Mr. Herbert Lindsay will come here to live again; for I hear he's got the appointment to preach at Beulah."

"No, he has not yet received a call to Beulah and Horeb; but the session have invited him to preach at Beulah next Sunday, with a view to offering him the charge of those churches, if his preaching should come up to their expectations."

"I don't suppose there is any doubt about that, for he is powerful smart; and they say he is the greatest scholar in all the country. He certainly does pray beautiful; I heard him at the chapel last summer during the big meeting. Well, it certainly will be nice to have him back at Ingleside again."

"He does not intend to make this his home, if he becomes the pastor of our church. Col. Lindsay and myself are extremely anxious that he should; but he says it is too far from his field of labor. He wishes to live among his congregation; and Beulah is six miles from here, while Horeb is twice as far and on the other side of the river."

"Where will he live then?"

"He expects to occupy the parsonage."

"All by himself?"

"Oh! no. Mrs. Dana, the widow of our former pastor, has been living there ever since her husband's death. She will continue to keep the house, and Herbert will board with her."

"Had you heard, Mrs. Lindsay, that Mrs. Bratton is coming to Brantley next month?"

"No, I had not. I heard several weeks ago that she was in Richmond; but I did not know that she intended coming to Brantley. I cannot imagine what is bringing her to her old home. It is strange that she should ever wish to see the place again. Were I in her place, I could not bear the sight of it."

"She is coming to have her son's monument put up. Tony Martin's son is apprenticed to a stone carver in Richmond that makes grave stones; and he wrote his father word last week that he's working on a beautiful monument for Mr. Russell Thornton, the finest one that they ever sent to the country; and that when its finished next month, Mrs. Bratton's coming down to Brantley herself to pick out the place for it in the graveyard and see it put up."

"Poor woman," said Mrs. Lindsay, "What a mournful task! What a sad, sad history is poor Russell's!"

"But it seems mighty strange to me," pursued Mrs. Matthews, "to be putting up a monument over nothing; for you know she never has had the body brought on. They say she could not get it from off the battlefield."

"No, that was impossible. Theodore Walker wrote that when the poor young man's remains were found, they had been almost entirely devoured by the wolves."

"Oh! how horrid! What a dreadful end! I hope Miss Nora will never hear that. Has anybody written to her that he is dead?"

"No, we have not mentioned it in our letters. Until two days ago, we were expecting her return during June; and we thought that would be time enough for her to learn such sad tidings. Besides, we dreaded the effect of her hearing it so far away among strangers. No, dear girl, that sorrow is still before her. I wish I could bear for her the grief she will feel when she does hear it. She has already suffered so much!—so young too, and so tenderly sheltered and carefully guarded as she has been all her life! It is sad to think how little we can do, after all, to spare and shield those we love best."

Just then there was the sound of footsteps on the porch, and some one entered the hall.

"That surely is Herbert's step," said Mrs. Lindsay. "I did not expect him until to-morrow. He has been spending several days with the Waller's, in James City, and I am sure has returned sooner than he expected."

In a few moments, Herbert entered the room, kissed his aunt affectionately, and greeted Mrs. Matthews, whom he had not seen for a good while, with great cordiality.

The past two years had wrought a very favorable change in him. His figure was stouter and more robust than it had ever been. His complexion, too, had a healthier hue; and a moustache of very silky texture and respectable proportions added to the manliness of his appearance. His countenance, naturally so placid and meditative, was lighted up with an expression of earnest purpose and lively interest in life. His manner, too, was more self-possessed, as well as more sprightly and energetic. The shy boyishness of two years ago had been superseded by a manliness at once dignified and gracious, modest and confident.

As soon as he had inquired after the health of the family and addressed a few pleasant remarks to Mrs. Matthews, he asked Mrs. Lindsay,

"Any tidings of Nora since I left Ingleside?"

"Yes," she replied; "We had a letter two days since. Here it is," she added, handing it to him.

He took it eagerly, opened it at once, and read it with great interest. Presently he asked,

"Who are these people from Richmond she writes about meeting?"

"What people? the Camerons?"

"Yes," he replied, proceeding to read a passage of the letter aloud; "she writes—

"We have seen but little of London yet, as we only arrived last night and Marie has not been very well to-day. Paul rode this morning in Hyde Park and met the Camerons, very pleasant people, from Richmond, Virginia. I did not know them at home, but we met them in Switzerland last summer, and again during the fall and winter in Rome

and Paris. We are going to call on them to-morrow morning; and as they expect to return to America immediately, I will send by them a box of handkerchiefs and gloves for you and a murschaum pipe for Uncle William, which I bought in Paris."

"I suppose," Mrs. Lindsay said, "that she alludes to the son and two daughters of Mr. Hugh Cameron, the banker. I heard last winter that they were in Europe. Your Uncle William has a business acquaintance with Mr. Cameron; and I have met his wife several times; but Nora, I suppose, had never met the young people. The daughters are much older than she is, and their brother has been for several years at a German university,"

"They have laid out a very charming programme for the summer," said Herbert, as he refolded the letter. "May, she writes, they will spend in London, to see English fashionable society at the height of the season. June and a part of July will be devoted to visiting Stratford-on-Avon, Newstead Abbey, the cathedral towns and Lake country of England, the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Then they propose spending five or six weeks in Scotland among the lakes and mountains. Next they will visit some points of interest in Ireland, stop a day or two in the Isle of Wight, and then make us all glad by coming home. I am inclined to envy them their summer excursions."

"Why don't you join them?" inquired Mrs. Lindsay. "You are entitled to a holiday, I think."

"Not at this time," he replied. "Should I receive a call to the church here, I feel that it would be my duty at once to enter upon my pastoral labors, especially as you have been nearly a year without a pastor and the pulpit has been kept vacant waiting for me to finish my theological course."

"That is very true. I suppose it would not be altogether proper for you to do so; but I wish you could have that pleasure. You have been studying so closely all your life and have allowed yourself so little recreation, that, I think, before entering upon your life work, it would be well for you to travel some."

Presently Mr. Lindsay returned from a morning ride, bringing with him Tom Harrison, whom he said he had picked up in the road and had brought hither in the hope of Tom's being able to coax a smile to Mrs. Lindsay's countenance, which had been as gloomy as a November sky ever since the receipt of Nora's last letter.

Except an increase of flesh, in compliance with the old saw, "Laugh and grow fat," Tom had not changed in appearance since the Tournament at The Grove. Neither had he changed in character or manners. As soon as the greetings were over, he said to Herbert,

"Well, parson, this is the first time I have had the pleasure of seeing you since your ordination; and I much fear the lightness of my conversation will not altogether accord with the grave humor of a reverend divine; but I hope you will excuse any little frivolities, in view of our former familiarity and good fellowship. You know it takes a fellow some little time to get used to the transformation of an old chum, into his spiritual instructor and adviser."

Herbert readily promised the most charitable consideration.

"We'll all have to learn to treat him with a good deal of respect," said Mr. Lindsay, "as he is going to become our pastor."

"Now, my young brother," said Tom, "is it possible you are rash enough to suppose you can fill the place of our lamented Brother Dana?"

Herbert modestly replied that he felt very unworthy of the position, nevertheless, if the people desired his ministrations, he was resolved to do the best he could for them.

"You are, I know, a conscientious fellow, and will do your level best; but you can't stand in Brother Dana's shoes. In the first place, your physical constitution is not equal to the task; you haven't got the wind to preach two hours and pray forty minutes at a stretch."

"Come, Tom," remonstrated Mrs. Lindsay, "you exaggerate fearfully. I acknowledged that Mr. Dana's exercises were rather unnecessarily prolonged; but he didn't preach and pray as long as that."

"I never timed him, but George Wilcox did every Sunday for fifteen years, and he swears that he did."

"It is ridiculous," said the lady, "that habit Col. Wilcox has of timing the services at church, just as if he were on the race course. His aunt, who is deeply interested in his salvation, told me that often under a most solemn and impressive discourse, she has anxiously looked towards him, hoping and expecting to see him deeply moved, and instead of this, has detected him coolly examining his watch, evidently only interested in ascertaining the length of the sermon."

"It is absurd," Tom assented; "but it has become such a fixed habit that only some strong measure will break it up. I say, parson, if you intend your eloquence to gain Wilcox's ear, you will have to carry a rock into the pulpit in your pocket, and at a favorable moment hurl it at that stumbling block of a chronometer and knock it to flinders. In that way you may get his attention."

"I dare say it would, and the attention of a good many more as well," observed Mrs. Lindsay; "but it is to be hoped that Herbert will not be reduced to such expedients to command the attention of his hearers. Your ideas are at least novel, Tom. Have you any other suggestion as valuable to make?"

"Plenty of them and some inquiries too. In the first place, I am dubious about Lindsay's orthodoxy. Now Brother Dana was nothing, if not orthodox; and his main efforts were directed to promoting orthodoxy among his people. In consequence, they are all trusting to their orthodoxy to carry them through; its the one thing they are running on."

Herbert replied that having thoroughly studied the doctrines of his church, and fully subscribing to them, he felt that he could safely submit to the most rigid examination on the subject.

"Ahem!" Tom stammered, "well, the truth is, I don't know that I am quite qualified to conduct such an examination at this time, owing more to a treacherous memory than the lack of original preparation. The fact is, in my childhood I led a rather itinerant life, bobbing around among my venerable grandmother, my beloved aunt and my fond parents, all of whom belonged to different churches, and each of whom made me study the catechism of her own sect. Consequently, my theology is rather mixed. But waiving the orthodoxy, parson, I know that you will never know as much as the omniscient Dana. He could explain, not only general but particular providences down to the minutest particular. Then, too, he claimed to be as well acquainted with the geography and topography of the New Jerusalem as I am with that of the city of Richmond."

"I am very much afraid, Tom," said Herbert gravely, "that if you continue so irreverent you will never have any experimental knowledge of the New Jerusalem yourself."

Not heeding this hint, the incorrigible Tom inquired,

"Have you selected the text for your first sermon, Lindsay?"

"Why? have you one to propose?"

"Yes, the very fittest in the Bible, the message to Sardis: 'I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.'"

"Remember, Tom," said Mrs. Lindsay, speaking warmly, "that I am a member of Beulah. I don't find it particularly agreeable to be called a hypocrite to my face."

"And you please remember, my dear cousin, that present company is always excepted! Besides, how could such a burning and shining light as yourself ever imagine a personal application of such a text? But will you be so good as to tell me how much Brother Dana's church grew during his pastorate of fifteen years?"

"Not at all," replied Mr. Lindsay. "And it is not strange that it did not, for there is more truth than poetry in what Tom has said about his preaching. Without the least injury to the sense or the connection, his dry, confused, interminable discourses might have been begun at the end and preached back to the beginning, or begun in the middle and preached out to either end. They were a weariness to the flesh and a bewilderment to the spirit. No wonder that the church has lapsed into such coldness and formality."

"Well," said the lady, fairly driven to the wall, "if our members are not quite as zealous and active as they ought to be, I am sure the officers of our church are very creditable to it and very faithful and efficient."

"Umph! not much material for martyrs among them," Tom remarked. "They are good citizens and respectable domestic characters, to be sure. Just how much religion they have, of course I can't say—let us hope enough to take them individually to Heaven—but I doubt if they ever win any one else to enter the kingdom by their zealous, charitable and self-denying labors."

"Why, Tom, what can you possibly have to say against Mr. Barron, Mr. Colgrave, Mr. Dervitt and Mr. Eaton?"

"Nothing at all against Mr. Eaton; he is my beau-ideal of an earnest, consistent Christian. He would do a good work in the church if he only had a chance; but he is like the live frog frozen up in a block of ice that we have all read about."

"Well, what of Mr. Barron?"

"Mr. Barron, Cousin Lucy? Well, what I fail to find in Brother Barron is that meekness, humility and tender sympathy that the apostles speak of so much as attributes of his Divine Master. Mr. Barron is entirely too full of Mr. Barron. Evidently his notion is that he is so well born, so well bred and so well circumstanced generally that he does not need but very little piety to carry him through. His name upon the church book, his mere indorsement of the thing, is enough to make it a success; therefore, anything like personal effort for its advancement would be entirely superfluous."

"And Brother Colgrave is very much after the same pattern. What an imposing personality is his, what dignity of bearing, what propriety of demeanor—all very well but for the loud betrayal of an overwhelming sense of self superiority. True, his pedigree is not quite up to Brother Barron's, but this accident is atoned for by a superior classical education, elegant literary culture, excessive refinement, a punctilious observance of etiquette, &c. Who could be so unreasonable as to expect him

to suffer his dignified repose to be disturbed by any concern about the salvation of Tom, Dick and Harry?"

"Well, as for Brother Dervitt's repose, that is in a chronic state of disturbance; he is all excitability, forever anxious and troubled about—*himself*—not his spiritual interests, but his bodily health. He imagines himself afflicted with a dozen diseases at once, and spends his whole time coddling and physicking himself at home or gadding abroad in search of change of air and scene. So little does he yearn for the bliss of Heaven, that all his energies and efforts are directed to keeping out of it as long as possible."

Mrs. Lindsay was evidently displeased. "I think," she said reprovingly, "that you are very unkind to discourage Herbert by such disparaging remarks about his congregation; and you are very unjust to our people. I am sure there is not a more desirable country charge in the State. Ours is decidedly the best educated, best behaved and most genteel looking country congregation I ever saw. Strangers have often remarked that for fashion and style it is equal to most city congregations."

"Oh! yes, you are fashionable and stylish enough, I admit. But I have never heard that the Christian church was organized to promote style and fashion. The trouble is your people are too stylish and fashionable by far. Your fashion and pride have driven all the poor people away. There are living within sight of your church, poor and ignorant people who greatly need religious instruction and consolation, yet who never darken its doors. Is not this so, Mrs. Matthews? Do you ever hear of any of the poor people around Beulah going there to church?"

"No, not one of them," was the reply, "except 'tis Mrs. Snead once in a while. Her daughters, Mary Ann and Betsy Susan, is monstrous fond of dress, two of the giddiest and vainest girls you ever see. I b'lieve they sets up to lead the fashion at Pisgah; so whenever one of 'em gits a new frock, she coaxes her mother into going with her to meeting at Beulah to see the fashions; and I hear 'em bragging any time that their clothes is made just like Mr. Barron's and Mr. Colgrave's daughters."

At this reply, Mr. Lindsay and Tom laughed heartily, their merriment heightened by Mrs. Lindsay's evident discomfiture. Herbert looked grave and thoughtful.

"Now," said Tom, "I have my doubts whether a church from which the poor are excluded, by whatever influence, can possibly be doing the work of Christ. You remember that when John sent his disciples to Jesus to inquire whether he was the Messiah, the Savior told them, 'Go your way and tell John what things ye have seen and heard, how the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and to the poor the gospel is preached.'"

"*Pro-di-gious!*" exclaimed Mr. Lindsay. "Is Saul among the prophets?" I should be utterly astounded, Tom, if I had not already heard that the devil can quote Scripture."

"Oh! I'm a fine Biblicist. I was raised mainly by my grandmother, a real true blue Knoxite. A good deal of my Scripture knowledge was driven in at the point of the rod; and consequently it sticks remarkably well in my memory."

"It is very evident it never got any farther than that," observed Mrs. Lindsay significantly.

"What Tom says about the poor people of the community not attending Benlah, is but too true. I have observed it myself, but was at a loss to know why they do not. If I become its pastor, I will try very hard to induce them to attend," said Herbert.

"They'll turn out to hear you, I know," said Mrs. Matthews. "I've heard of a heap of them that's going out Sunday."

"That's encouraging," remarked Tom. "There's no telling where curiosity won't carry people. Now we all know if they go once to hear our young brother here, they'll be sure to go again. Cousin Lucy, I think Herbert is going to be a decided success as a parson. He's a good looking fellow, and a bachelor; and I've noticed that there is nothing in the world so effective in arousing zeal in a church as a young, handsome and unmarried pastor. You know that in all churches, the ladies are largely in the majority, (some celebrated divine declares that he never preached to a congregation where the men were in the majority but once in his life, and that was in the State Prison), and the dear creatures carry on most of the church work, Dorcas societies, Sunday schools, Missionary societies, &c. Now when the fair sisterhood of Beulah once get fairly enthused, won't there be a waking up in this modern Sardis?"

"It is to be hoped that everybody does not regard my entering the ministry as quite such a good joke as you evidently consider it, Tom," said Herbert. "If they do, I fear my labors will be of little avail."

The arrival of the boy who had been sent to the post office, and the distribution of the mail, here interrupted the conversation. At Mrs. Lindsay's request, Herbert unfolded a newspaper and commenced reading the latest news. Mr. Lindsay withdrew to the parlor to read his letters, but soon returned with one which had greatly surprised him, and handed it to his wife. It was as follows:

"RICHMOND, May 17th.

"COL. WM. LINDSAY:

*Dear Sir,*—I forward, as desired, the inclosed telegram from my son and daughters, who have just arrived in New York from Europe. It will afford us much pleasure to entertain Miss Wyndham during her stay in the city; and if you conclude to meet her in Richmond, I hope you will come at once to my house.

Very respectfully, HUGH CAMERON."

The accompanying telegram was, "Arrived this morning, and will leave to-morrow evening for Richmond. Miss Nora Wyndham is with us. Please forward this to her uncle, Col. Wm. Lindsay, of Ingleside."

"Nora in America!" exclaimed Mrs. Lindsay, surprise at the totally unexpected intelligence almost stifling her joy. What in the world can have caused her to change her mind? I hope nothing disagreeable has occurred. It is very strange indeed. She wrote me her plans so fully and positively for spending the whole summer in England and Scotland, just a few days before leaving. She spoke, too, of the Cameron's returning to America, but did not hint at such a thing as her accompanying them. I am completely mystified."

"Can she have heard of Russell Thornton's death?" asked Herbert.

"That is scarcely possible; none of us have ever mentioned it in our letters."

"Perhaps she got hold of some Richmond papers, and learned it that way."

"Was any notice of it published?" inquired Tom.

"Yes, Mr. Dashiell had a notice published in the *Enquirer*. But I suppose you are too good a Whig to read that journal."

"I am too good a Whig to subscribe to the *Enquirer*, and so rarely see it. But I should like to see that number."

"I have the paragraph," said Herbert, taking it from between the

leaves of a little memorandum book he carried in his pocket, and handing it to Tom, who read it aloud :

"Killed in a cavalry battle near Saltillo, Mexico, a few days previous to the battle of Buena Vista, Russell Thornton, Esq., of Virginia. At the time of his death, he held the rank of lieutenant in the Texas Rangers, and had greatly distinguished himself for courage and gallantry. His afflicted mother has been honored by an autograph letter of condolence from Gen. Zachary Taylor, in which he speaks in the highest terms of Lieut. Thornton and deeply laments his loss to the service."

"Do you reckon that's true about the letter from Gen. Taylor?" inquired Tom.

"Yes, I know it is true ; for I have read the letter. I called on Mrs. Bratton when I came through Richmond, and she showed it to me, and told me all she had been able to learn about the death of her unfortunate son. Poor Russell ! his was indeed a sad life. There is some consolation in knowing that he died an honorable death."

After reading the telegram a second time, Mr. Lindsay said, "If the Camerons and Nora left New York when they expected, they will reach Richmond to-morrow. By setting off at once, I may get to town in time to meet her ; and we can come down on the boat Friday evening. I will make Henry drive me up to the city and bring the buggy and horses back."

"I am a better driver than Henry," said Tom, "and I should be delighted to take his place. By starting at three o'clock, we can reach the house of my brother John, who lives on the direct road to Richmond, by ten o'clock to-night. There we can take a fresh pair of his horses, and start on our journey again before sunrise to-morrow morning."

This plan was agreed upon ; and after some hurried preparations, Mr. Lindsay set off to meet his niece, while Mrs. Lindsay joyfully went to work to prepare for her reception.

Herbert's surmise was correct. It was the news of Russell Thornton's death that was bringing Nora home. She, Paul and Marie went to call on the Camerons the day after her letter to Mrs. Lindsay was written ; and when they were leaving, Miss Cameron handed her a package of newspapers, saying :

"Here are some papers from Richmond, Virginia, which you may like to see, Miss Wyndham. I fear, though, there is but little in them to interest you besides the home news. I have not looked over them, but brother Horace read aloud to us what he thought most entertaining, which was very little. After the 'Times' and the 'Moniteur,' our little provincial journals seem very tame indeed."

Paul and Marie went to the theatre that evening ; and after they were gone, Nora, having nothing else to occupy her, opened her package of Richmond papers. She had not read long before her eye fell upon the same paragraph that Herbert had showed to Tom Harrison at Inglesde.

She knew that Russell was a soldier, and she had read from time to time in the New Orleans papers, which Paul received regularly, accounts of the severe fighting going on in Mexico. It had sometimes occurred to her that amid such dangers, her former lover might be killed ; and at times she had felt a keen anxiety on his account. But surrounded by cheerful and interesting companions, and passing constantly from place to place, amid scenes of commanding beauty and absorbing interest, her

mind had not brooded upon this sad subject. Indeed, much of the time during the past year of travel, everything but surrounding scenes and transpiring incidents was forgotten. This totally unexpected announcement as fact of what had only been familiar to her as a vague and fitting apprehension, was a terrible shock.

Alas! that greatest calamity, that crowning agony of humanity, for which nothing can prepare us, and to which nothing can reconcile us, the death of those we love! O, thou Great King of Terrors, with what numb despair does our impotence cower before thy omnipotence!

O, thou mysterious Tomb, when once the sombre veil that hides thy dread secret, has fallen between us and one who was the light of our eyes, the joy of our life, its shadow never leaves the soul, but flits about us even in our gayest hours, a spectral skeleton at the feast of life. Never again does the world seem what it once was. Happiness which before seemed a thing so real, appears now an illusory phantom; and grief, erst a vague shadow, in bodily presence walks beside us evermore, never to know more than a temporary dislodgment.

Nora had never expected to meet Russell Thornton again, and had scarcely dared to hope that she would ever hear from him. But there was some comfort in knowing that they shared a common existence, that the same sun shone upon them, the same sky bent over them, the same bright and beautiful world smiled around them. There was yet a community of interests while both enjoyed human friendships and shared human sympathies. And though in bodily presence sundered far, she felt that there was still a unity of soul, since each must be often present to the other in thoughts and dreams. She could still love him and think of him and pray for him; and somehow she felt that her love and prayers must reach and bless him at the remotest bounds of the earth.

But he was dead—gone out of the world—passed out of the existence which was still hers. He was gone from the places and the things she knew to those she knew not of—sped away a lone voyager upon "that mysterious bourn from which no traveller returns." The brilliant eyes had looked their last upon the bright sun whose beams still gladdened the world around; the noble form which had trod the earth so grandly was lying beneath the damp mould, dissolving away to dust. And the soul that had animated that proud form and looked forth from those glorious eyes, where was it now? Where?—oh! where?

A heart breaking agony convulsed her. The paper dropped from her hand, and she fell upon her knees, covering her face with her hands as if to shut out the dreadful lines that had given her bruised heart its dreadful wound.

As she crouched there alone in her chamber in the crowded hotel, in the very heart of the world's great Babel, with its thronging millions surging around her, a sense of utter loneliness and desolation swept over her. Her stony eyes unclosed and stared wildly around, and her white lips gasped hoarsely, "Home! home!"

What to her now were blue mountains, and silvery lakes and smiling valleys?—What were proud cities and grand cathedral?—What were the richest treasures of art and the grandest triumphs of science? *He* could never see them; *he* had passed away from all these forever.

And oh! how her bereaved heart ached for communion with the loving hearts throbbing so warmly for her across the broad and heaving ocean. They knew him, they loved him, they would sorrow for him. They alone could understand and sympathize with her grief. She had

never talked of Russell to Paul and Marie; and she could not do so, now that death had made his memory sacred. But she felt that she must weep upon some sympathizing human breast, or die.

How her soul thirsted for the loving looks and tender tones of her uncle and aunt! But still more did her heart yearn for Herbert's warm and delicate sympathy. Neither Mr. nor Mrs. Lindsay was largely endowed with sensibility, the cheery, practical disposition of the one and the pride and worldly wisdom of the other not being favorable to very keen and nice feeling. But Herbert possessed, with a kind and loving nature, an exquisite sensibility, which endowed him with a power of lively and generous sympathy very precious to all who enjoyed his friendship, and to no one in the world so precious as to his adopted sister. With no one else had she ever been able to talk freely about Russell, and all she had suffered on his account; and she felt now that if she could mingle her tears with his, it would ease her heart as nothing else could.

A sleepless night of weeping left such woeful traces on her countenance as to greatly surprise and distress her cousins on their meeting next morning; and they were still more surprised and grieved when she announced her intention of returning to America with the Camerons. She silenced their remonstrances by pointing out the paragraph announcing Russell's death, and then went hurriedly from the room to avoid any discussion of the subject.

When they discovered the cause of her desire to return home immediately, Paul and Mary offered to accompany her, being unwilling to resign her to the society of comparative strangers in a condition of such mental distress. But to such a sacrifice on their part, Nora would not consent. On coming to Europe, they had sailed to Havre and had spent the past year on the continent, reserving the last months of their stay abroad to travel in the British Isles. Both Nora and Marie had regarded this as the most interesting part of their tour; and she would not allow her cousins to give up their plans for the summer on her account.

Finally, seeing that nothing else would content his cousin, Paul went off to see the Camerons and arrange for her passage; and Marie assisted her to pack her trunks and prepare for the return voyage.

The Misses Cameron and their brother were confined to their state-room by sea-sickness during nearly the whole voyage. Though Nora scarcely suffered at all from this terrible *mal de mer* after the first three days out, she made it a pretext for keeping closely in her state-room. In its profound privacy she could freely indulge her grief; and it was an immeasurable relief to be able to weep unrestrainedly. For there is a sacredness in deep sorrow which forbids its obtrusion on others; and, at the same time, there is no sorer trial than the having to simulate calmness and cheerfulness when the heart is well nigh breaking.

These ten days of solitary communion with grief familiarized her with her sorrow; and by the time the voyage was ended, the first wild burst of anguish was over and she had resumed the wonderful self control which had marked the period of her earlier troubles.

When on the Friday afternoon following the receipt of the telegram at Ingleside, Nora stepped from the boat and was received in her aunt's arms, although her face was pale and her manner languid, there was a faint sparkle of pleasure in her humid eyes and a soft smile of mingled love and gladness on her tremulous lips. Herbert had come with his aunt to meet her; and the greeting between the adopted brother and sister was most cordial and tender.

Mr. Lindsay, having learned from his niece the cause of her sudden return, took an early opportunity of communicating it to his wife and Herbert; and they, fearing the effect of her return to scenes so closely associated with her dead lover, watched her anxiously. But they were much relieved to find that although grave and sad, she seemed perfectly composed, and that the emotions immediately excited by her return home seemed wholly pleasurable.

She did not mention Russell's name to any one until that evening immediately after supper, when she found herself alone with Herbert. Then with an abruptness that startled and a composure which surprised him, she asked,

"Have you seen Mrs. Bratton since her return to Virginia, Herbert?"

"Yes," was his reply. "I called upon her when I came through Richmond."

"How does she bear her son's death?"

"With much fortitude and Christian resignation. She seems to have a good deal of hope in Russell's death. She thinks he was a Christian; and from what she says of the change in him during his residence in Texas, I think we may all safely cherish the belief that he was prepared for the great and solemn change which awaits us all, and that we may, like her, find consolation in the hope that he is happy now in a better world than this."

"Tell me about him, all that his mother told you," she said in a low tone of mingled sadness and rejoicing, as she drew near to him and earnestly and eagerly fixed her eyes on his face.

And Herbert told her what Mrs. Bratton had said of her son's regular attendance at church, his diligent and interested study of the Bible, his expression of Christian sentiments, and above all the meekness, gentleness and patience of his disposition, which had once been so proud, passionate and imperious. She told him, too, how at twilight he would walk up and down the long piazza and sing his favorite hymns, especially, "There is a Fountain filled with Blood" and "Rock of Ages." And she showed him a pocket Bible of her son's, which had been given him by Nora long ago when they were children, and in which were marked many texts relating to the pardon of sin and containing the promise of salvation to the repentant sinner.

On the margin opposite one of these—"The blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanseth from all sin"—was written in pencil in Russell's handwriting: "Precious blood! Dear Saviour, cleanse my guilty soul."

"Russell was the soul of sincerity," said Herbert. "When we were together in New Orleans, he told me that it was his earnest desire to be a Christian, that he was striving to become one, and that for his future life, he had no other aim or purpose than to live up to the highest standard of Christian manhood. However deeply we must lament his early death, dear Nora, we need not sorrow as those without hope."

"And oh! what a precious hope!" she exclaimed clasping her hands over her aching heart. "I cannot tell you what a relief, what an inexpressible comfort it is to me to hear all this. And oh! how much better, after all, it will be when we recover from the shock of this sad tidings, to think of him pardoned, sanctified, safe and happy in Heaven, than as a poor, miserable fugitive, living in exile and disgrace."

After a little pause, she added, "Doubtless, we ought to love God so well that the bliss of communion with him would make us oblivious of every other presence; but our human ties are strong, very, very strong."

While my humanity survives, Heaven must seem nearer and dearer to me and better worth striving for because I believe Russell to be there. How easy it will be for me to leave the world, with him holding out his dear hands to me across the 'dark river.'"

Some previous engagement compelled Herbert to leave Ingleside early the next morning, and Nora did not see him again until Sunday, when his first sermon was to be preached at Beulah.

This was an occasion of absorbing interest to the young man's family. His uncle and aunt were very uneasy lest his constitutional shyness might operate greatly to his disadvantage; but Nora felt confident that notwithstanding the embarrassment of the situation, a profound sense of the dignity and responsibility of this position would raise him above all thoughts of self and give him the needed calmness and self possession.

When the family from Ingleside reached Beulah on this momentous occasion, they found the church already crowded; but Mrs. Dana had reserved them seats in her pew.

The congregation was, as Mrs. Lindsay had said, unusually stylish and fashionable for the country, being mainly composed of the *élite* of the rural population, a class which at that time in that community vied with the best city circles in refinement and elegance. But to-day there was a large sprinkling of the poor and uneducated members of the community, as Mrs. Matthews had predicted there would be.

The elders, who were sitting together in front of the pulpit, looking very interested, and three of them at least very consequential, might have been recognized from Tom Harrison's description.

Upon the faces of the congregation was a look of interest and expectation which reminded Nora of the day when Tom Matthews had preached at Pisgah for the first time. The remembrance of that ill-starred day brought Russell most vividly before her. How handsome and bright he had looked that morning—how instinct with vigorous life! She remembered so well his look of suppressed amusement, the merry twinkle in his eye, as it rapidly sought hers when Darby entered and dropped upon his knees, and again when Sam Jenkins pushed frantically past the opposing barrier of uplifted knees and squeezed into the seat behind Darby. Alas! little did he dream how closely these two were connected with his destiny—what a terrible secret was even then slumbering in their keeping!

How long ago that time seemed now! How much had transpired since then! But the worst was over now. She felt like some shipwrecked mariner after a storm—passive with the exhaustion of suffering. She had no restless, feverish hopes for the future—and no fears—fate had done its worst. She recognized and accepted her destiny—calmly to endure, earnestly to labor, patiently to wait. In her heart was the earnest purpose to make her life one long effort to heighten the happiness and alleviate the misery of her fellow-creatures, and thus to follow the Saviour who had died for the sins of the world.

Notwithstanding her absorption in her own sad thoughts, Nora soon observed that many eyes were bent curiously upon her; and then she remembered that this was her first public appearance in the community since Herbert's illness and Russell Thornton's flight. Everybody knew the sad story of her marriage being so suddenly broken off by the fearful tragedy which had convulsed the community; and they were looking to see what changes time and suffering had wrought. These were not so great as they had supposed. Her figure had long since regained its

roundness and her face its lovely contour. Her eyes were as bright and her lips as fresh as ever, but the delicate bloom which before her long illness had always tinged her cheeks had faded forever, except when momentarily recalled by some transient excitement. Also, the sparkling joyousness of her countenance in early girlhood had given place to a sweet serenity, which at times deepened to a wistful sadness. This change of expression, with the change in the style of wearing her hair, the bright curls being now turned in a shining coil low in her neck, made her look older than she had done two years ago, but not less attractive. "A little less beautiful, perhaps, but lovelier than ever," had been Herbert's mental comment on the evening of her return; and this was also the verdict of many at Beulah that day.

Nora had rightly surmised that Herbert's conception of the sacredness of the theme of his discourse and the solemnity of the occasion, would enable him to rise above all thoughts of self, and so give him full command of his mental powers. There was a slight flush on his cheek when he arose, and in the opening sentence, his utterance was not perfectly distinct; but his embarrassment was momentary. With perfect self command he went through the opening services, then announced his text: "The blood of Jesus Christ, His son, cleanseth from all sin."

Nora knew that his text had been suggested by his conversation with Mrs. Bratton and by the examination of Russell's Bible; and before Herbert had proceeded very far with its discussion, she felt sure that his present discourse was intended as a memorial sermon of his unfortunate friend. This conviction greatly deepened her interest in it, and fully accounted to her for the impassioned earnestness with which he depicted the "exceeding sinfulness of sin," its exceeding hurtfulness to man, the misery and ruin it entails, and the great necessity of mankind for a remedy against this great evil. And as with earnest tenderness, lively hope and holy joy he presented this remedy, she felt as she had never done before the preciousness of the atonement, and with renewed fervor consecrated her life to the service of "Him who hath loved us and given himself for us."

Some of Herbert's remarks were interpreted by even the most obtuse to refer to the startling tragedy, which two years ago had so shocked the whole community. When defining and denouncing sin he said,

"Men go on from day to day and year to year in the habitual indulgence and practice of sin, without any compunction whatever, without realizing its heinousness and the danger of dallying with it, until suddenly some unfortunate brother, led on almost insensibly by the impulses that indulgence has fostered to a strength beyond the power of his feeble will to combat, overleaps the barrier reared by the civil law for the protection of society, and commits a startling and terrible crime. The respectable citizen of to-day becomes the felon of to-morrow. The civil law, which in all Christendom is founded upon the law of God—that beneficent protector which has secured to him his most precious rights, guarding with sleeping vigilance his life and property—that outraged law turns against the luckless infractor, and becomes his formidable and relentless prosecutor. Its avenging sword falls upon the murderer, the adulterer or the thief; and on the gallows or in the penitentiary his crime is expiated.

"How fearful a thing is this!—a human life suddenly cut off, or prolonged in wearisome and miserable captivity—a family disgraced and ruined—a mother, wife and sisters heart-broken—descendants and relations bearing to remote generations the shame and mortification of one

man's foul deed ! Yes, we all recognize the enormity of crime, and recoil from it in shuddering horror. But what is crime but sin full-grown ? The propensities that lead to its commission have an inception, a growth and development. They do not, at the terrible moment of the man's fall, spring into existence full-grown and fully armed, like Minerva from the head of Jupiter. They might have been curbed, combatted, subdued. Let us remember that when we give the rein to our carnal passions, we are rushing to a bottomless abyss of horror ; that while we foster our besetting sin, whatever it may be, we are nursing in our bosoms a serpent that at any moment may turn and slay us.

"Thanks to the restraints of the law, thanks to the beneficent influences of the gospel, and thanks to the prayers of the righteous Lots in every modern Sodom, but a small number of our race fall into crime. To but a few does the overpowering temptation come in the fatal moment of weakness. And so, in the eyes of their fellow creatures, the lives of most men, though marred by many a laxity, appear decently exemplary, so low is the moral standard of a sin-blinded world.

"But 'The Lord seeth not as man seeth ; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.' The pure eyes of the Omniscient One see beyond a man's acts, even into the very thoughts of his heart. In the unregenerate soul, where sin is not only unresisted but cherished, he sees a perennial fountain of pollution, poisoning the whole life. The decree of the highest wisdom and justice is that 'He who hateth his brother is a murderer ;' 'whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery in his heart ;' he who covets his neighbor's goods is in heart a thief, since without covetousness there would be no theft. You, then, my respectable fellow citizen, living in the habitual indulgence of sin, yet keeping within the pale of the civil law, and even within the bounds prescribed by decent society, you who look with such contempt and horror upon the convicted criminal, remember that in the pure eyes of the heart-searching God you are as much condemned as the felon is in yours.

"Judged by this high standard of immaculate justice and purity, which of us could stand upon his own merits ? Not one—'there is none righteous—no, not one.' The very thought of our unworthiness is enough to cover us with shame and confusion ; the very contemplation of our danger, enough to plunge us into despair. Yet how insensible are we to both ! For alas ! mankind in a state of nature is 'dead in trespasses and sins.' But by the spirit of God we may be quickened into a higher and purer spiritual life. And in the throes of that new birth, we get our first adequate conception of the 'exceeding sinfulness of sin,' of our own guilt and pollution, of our misery and danger, and of our utter inability to throw off the yoke of sin or to make atonement for our past transgressions. Then how inexpressibly precious is the assurance that 'The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.' Yes, he hath suffered for our transgressions, and borne our sins in his own body. He, 'the Lamb of God without spot or blemish,' has made atonement for the sins of the world ; and he freely offers salvation to all, proclaiming through his ministers, 'He that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out,' and promising to the repentant sinner, 'Though thy sins be as scarlet they shall be whiter than snow.'

"And not only in the hour of regeneration, but all through our Christian course do we cling to this blest assurance of the merits of Christ. For the thief within the prison walls, the murderer on the gal-

lows, scarcely need that atoning blood more than we, so far do our imperfect lives fall short of the glory of God. When we believe we have passed from death unto life, and are trying to walk in newness of life, having before us the divine injunction, 'Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect,' and striving to follow the footsteps of the Immaculate One who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin, finding continually that 'when we would do good evil is present with us,' and falling, as we often do, before the combined powers of the world, the flesh and the devil, we must give up in despair could we claim no higher merit than our own. But we are strengthened and encouraged to maintain the conflict, knowing that though 'All have sinned and come short of the glory of God,' yet 'the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.'

The services concluded with the singing of "Rock of Ages," after which the congregation was dismissed, and Herbert withdrew from the church. Then the session presided over a congregational meeting, which unanimously elected Herbert to the pastorate of Beulah and Horeb.

The Lindsays were stopped on the way to their carriage by Messrs. Barron and Colgrave, who were anxious to express to Herbert's relatives their sincere approbation of the pastor elect.

Said Mr. Barron, "I must congratulate you, Mr. Lindsay, on the decided success of your nephew in this his first pulpit effort in our midst. His sermon to-day did infinite credit to a tyro. If he goes on as he has begun, I have no doubt he will attain to a high position in the church. We are most fortunate in securing his services."

"I have always admired Mr. Herbert Lindsay's manners, and entertained a flattering opinion of his abilities," said Mr. Colgrave; "and so my expectations on the present occasion were very high; but they have been fully realized. He is a natural orator, and I have no doubt will prove another Samuel Davies."

These brethren were just turning off, when Mr. Dervitt came shuffling up, turning up his coat collar to protect his throat, and sucking a lozenge.

"Upon my soul," he said, "Herbert astonished us all to-day. I couldn't have believed that such a shy fellow could have done so well on a first occasion—not at all embarrassed—has a pleasant voice, too, and a graceful manner—nothing abrupt or boisterous in his style. What I liked best in Brother Dana was his quietness—nothing exciting in his preaching. I hope Herbert will copy him, for I can't bear excitement. In my health, my nerves can't stand it."

When Mr. Dervitt had taken leave of them, and the carriage was driving off, Mr. Eaton, who had been shaking hands with all the poor people he knew and being introduced to those he did not know, called to the coachman to stop, and hurrying forward addressed Mr. Lindsay,

"I could not let you go away without telling you how pleased I am with your nephew's preaching, and how delighted I am at the prospect of his being our pastor. I like his style so much—such simplicity and fervor. He evidently *believes* all he says, and *feels it*—ay, *feels it* and *means it*. That's my idea of successful preaching, after all. His manner in the pulpit could not be improved."

"I'll tell you what his pulpit manner reminds me of, Mr. Eaton," said Nora, "some lines of Cowper to which Herbert himself first directed my attention several years ago:

“ Would I describe a preacher, such as Paul  
Were he on earth, would hear, approve and own,  
Paul should himself direct me. I would trace  
His master strokes, and draw from his design;  
I would express him simple, grave, sincere;  
In doctrine uncorrupt, in language plain,  
And plain in manner; decent, solemn, chaste,  
And natural in gesture; much impressed,  
Himself, as conscious of his awful charge,  
And anxious mainly that the flock he feeds  
May feel it, too; affectionate in look  
And tender in address, as well becomes  
A messenger of grace to guilty men.”

“ A fine description, Miss Nora, and very applicable to Mr. Herbert Lindsay; but I'll tell you what I was reminded of while listening to him to-day. You remember when Peter and John were brought before the high priest and elders, and called upon to state by what power they had healed the lame man at the gate Beautiful, that as they proclaimed salvation through Christ, the hearers, 'took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus.' ”

## CHAPTER XIII.

Tom Harrison's shaft had struck very near the mark when he styled Herbert's charge a modern Sardis. Although this church had long been established in the community, and there was a good deal of wealth among its members, its growth had always been slow, and under Mr. Dana's pastorage had ceased entirely.

In the beginning, this gentleman had been recommended to them by his amiable character, blameless life and his influential family connections, his grand-father, father and several uncles having been distinguished divines. Although his mind had no force or originality, it possessed a sort of receptive faculty which enabled him to imbibe sufficient knowledge to win him some reputation as a scholar; and as there are not many people astute enough to recognize a fool under a decent clothing of erudition, not many of his people suspected his mental deficiency. When, as it often happened, they could make nothing of his long-winded rambling discourses, they modestly took the blame to themselves, charging their own shallow understandings with inability to sound the profound depths of such abstruse speculations.

It is true that a certain school-master had complained of the intricacy and obscurity of his interminable periods, and charged that sometimes his ostensible subjects were without predicates and his predicates without any recognizable subjects; but this cavilling was set down to pedantry, that notorious failing of pedagogues. Besides, who but a school-master was expected to know anything about subjects and predicates?

And it was Mr. Dana's good fortune, before he had been long enough at Beulah and Horeb for the development and improvement his people were expecting in him from his own youth and illustrious ancestry, to marry a niece of Mr. Barron's, who was the first cousin to Mrs. Colgrave. This marriage, of course, allied him closely to his people, especially as his wife, who was somewhat his senior, was both clever and popular. The intelligence and tact, as well as the agreeable manners and superior character of his wife, had done much towards reconciling the people to her husband's unprofitable ministry; and so matters had gone on from year to year until his pastorate had reached its fifteenth year.

Then, in spite of an illustrious ancestry, a clever wife and indulgent people, he was removed. He had received a call, not to bore another congregation with dry, dull, doctrinal discourses and plunge another community into spiritual stagnation, but to answer at the bar of God for feeding hungry souls with the husk and chaff of theological speculation, rather than the living bread of the Father's love, the Son's atonement, and the beauty and blessing of a holy life.

Such a charge as that of Mr. Dana's successor was necessarily a difficult one, especially for an inexperienced pastor. But although Herbert lacked experience, he brought to the work a degree of zeal and devotion

that more than atoned for this want. As a primary requisite for the position, too, he possessed a spirit somewhat akin to that of his Divine Master, a spirit of tender love for humanity and unutterable pity for its woes, and of generous self sacrifice in its behalf. With wide apprehension and lively sympathy, he realized the sin and misery of man's fallen estate; and he earnestly and sincerely believed that the gospel affords the only remedy for human depravity and wretchedness. To present this precious gospel to his fellow men, to offer to them its blessings and urge upon them its claims, he considered the highest privilege and the noblest pursuit attainable by man. And actuated by these profound convictions, he threw his whole heart and soul into the work.

The modesty and gentleness of his nature, and his studious habits had rendered him so quiet and unobtrusive that few suspected the reserve forces of his character until the pressure of congenial duties brought them into play. Then, the earnestness, enthusiasm and energy he displayed, so transformed him that one could scarcely recognize the shy and retiring student in the active, zealous and enterprising pastor.

He did not confine his pastoral visits to the communicants of his church, but included in the list all who attended regularly upon his ministry. This brought him in contact with many of the poor people of the community, who came to hear him first on account of his family, they having always been popular in the neighborhood, but soon from good will towards himself. His evident interest in their welfare and earnest efforts to benefit them, were not without results. Very soon they flocked to hear him.

This was a source of sincere and intense gratification to him, and also to most of his people, though a few fastidious personages regarded with anything but satisfaction such an influx of the "great unwashed."

Mr. Eaton was shocked beyond measure to hear the Misses Barron and Colgrave complain of the number of poor people who crowded the pews so uncomfortably, to the detriment of the flounces of these fashionable ladies, and filled the church with the odor of bad tobacco clinging to their hair and clothing. And when they blamed Mr. Lindsay for paying so much attention to that class, and gathering such a rabble about him, and hinted that his doing so would drive the more genteel people away from the church, the elder could no longer restrain his indignation, but proceeded to read these thoughtless girls such a lecture on the subject of the church's duty to the poor as they did not soon forget.

"Mr. Lindsay has high authority for encouraging and inducing the poor to attend church," he said, "no less than the Son of God, who although 'He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor,' and spent his whole life on this earth among the poor. The fishermen of Galilee, whom he chose as his companions, to receive his teachings during his life and proclaim his doctrines after his death, were not, I dare say, better dressed or more highly perfumed than our poor neighbors who go to hear Mr. Lindsay preach the gospel.

"You know that one of the evidences of the genuineness of Christ's mission was that 'to the poor the gospel is preached.' Surely, under the toil and privations of their hard and narrow lot, they of all others most need its consolations; and being without the refinements of education and the stimulus of social rank, they particularly need its restraints. In my opinion, that church is most acceptably doing the work of Christ, and will most richly receive his blessing in its growth and perpetuation, which draws into its folds the largest number of this unfortunate class.

"I know," he added, waxing sarcastic, "that it is not very comfortable to be crowded on a warm day, and bad odors are decidedly disagreeable; but, on the whole, such discomforts are slight compared to the stonings, scourgings and imprisonments of the apostles, and to the cruel persecutions endured by the early Christians."

Nothing is more contagious than earnestness and enthusiasm, especially if they are found united with those qualities of mind and heart and those graces of manner which irresistibly win the respect and the kinds regards of men and women. Under the influence of the ardent young pastor, and stimulated by his example, the whole church was quickened and revived. Nor was the interest confined to the membership; it seemed to extend to every member of the congregation.

Tom Harrison and Col. Wilcox seemed to regard Herbert as their particular protégé, and his pastorate as a pet experiment of their own. They were very active in all church enterprises, and particularly efficient in getting up and carrying through Sunday school pic-nics.

But although coöperating so zealously with his young friend, Tom's irrepressible love of fun caused him to annoy the modest pastor no little by teasing him successively about every unmarried female in the congregation, including Mrs. Wilson, a rich and zealous widow, the mother of three grown-up sons, Miss Nixon, a pious spinster, who had been a communicant of Beulah before Herbert's birth, and Lisa Jane Jenkins, who had developed into a very promising Sunday school scholar.

In Herbert's own family, his ministerial labors were regarded with the liveliest interest; and Mr. and Mrs. Lindsay and Nora did all in their power for the furtherance of his plans. Mr. Lindsay's purse was open to every call for money; and his wife became president of the sewing society and a teacher in the Sunday school.

Not content with the active part Nora took in the church work, Herbert was always drawing her into some charitable work, such as visiting the sick and afflicted, preparing a wedding present for some poor girl he had been called upon to unite to the man of her choice, or making up warm garments, purchased by him, for some friendless old person or orphan child. This he did both to divert her thoughts from her own sorrow and to cultivate in her the spirit and the habit of Christian charity. Her kind and sympathetic nature found true pleasure and consolation in these labors of love.

Herbert continued to reside at the parsonage; but he was so often at Ingleside that he still seemed like one of the family. He and Nora took up a systematic course of reading, and regularly discussed the books they read, with a view to mutual pleasure and improvement, though Nora felt assured she was much the greater gainer thereby. And, as of old, in all the little matters of her every day life, she constantly sought his sympathy and approval, with a sisterly frankness and affection that were very precious to him. The painful episode of his unfortunate love-making seemed quite forgotten between them.

Nora had suffered so much since then that it had nearly faded from her memory. When she did think of it, it was as a youthful error of Herbert's. He was wiser now; he had long since seen the folly and absurdity of seeking to disturb the pleasant and comfortable relations between them, she thought.

Although Herbert had always regretted that luckless declaration and wished to have it forgotten, he had not ceased to love his adopted sister. Indeed, all that she had suffered had only endeared her the more to him.

But he never thought of marriage as the crowning reward of his devotion. He knew the delicacy and fidelity of her nature too well to believe that she could immediately "be off with the old love and on with the new." For a long time, the first place in her heart, he knew, would be given to a memory; and he was content yet a while to hold the second place.

These two had always been regarded in the community almost as brother and sister; and only Mr. and Mrs. Lindsay were cognizant of the little sentimental episode that had disturbed their fraternal relations; so the affectionate intercourse between them gave rise to no gossip. That irresistible propensity which idle people, incapable of any higher subjects of interest, exhibit for discovering preferences between unmarried people and scenting out love affairs in the most unexpected quarters, did not desecrate their devoted friendship by giving it another name while their hearts were so filled with the memory of him who had been the lover of one, the dearest friend of the other.

In the meantime, Mrs. Bratton had been to Brantley and had a handsome monument erected to the memory of her son, among the tombs of his ancestors. And Herbert and Nora had visited it together and deposited upon it their floral offerings. Then, as certain anniversaries came around, with their train of sad and tender associations, Nora went alone to weep and pray beside the cold stone bearing the beloved name, and to deck it with the flowers he loved, though his precious dust lay in the soldier's unmarked grave on the distant battlefield.

Among the members of Beulah was one, who although she had heretofore been regarded as a very insignificant personage, yet by her agency in an enterprise that was set on foot during the first winter of Herbert's pastorate, rendered to the church and community a service which gave her name an honorable local celebrity.

This lady, the wife of a small farmer in a section of country known as "the forest," had been brought up in a city, and so had enjoyed advantages unusual in her station, both for secular education and religious instruction. She was thoroughly indoctrinated with the tenets of her church, and warmly attached to its form of government and mode of worship. Her family cares and the distance of her home from the church made her attendance somewhat irregular; but she never missed a communion, and her contributions were liberal and promptly rendered.

As her means were limited, her domestic duties heavy, her æsthetic faculty but feebly developed, and her personal vanity *nil*, (having but little, in fact, to foster it in the reflection of the little, peaked, wizened face presented by her mirror), she was singularly indifferent to dress. The age or fashion of a garment, so long as it was intact, weighed with her not at all. And as she never had occasion to wear her best clothes except to church, they lasted amazingly. Indeed, there was nobody in the congregation antiquarian enough to determine the age or identify the period of her immense drawn silk bonnet and scant silk dress, with a triple scalloped cape, which time had faded to one of those neutral, nondescript tints so fashionable now, but quite unique in that unæsthetic age.

That pre-historic dress and bonnet had, for years, formed a subject of curious speculation and unending amusement among the young people of the congregation. But pious and sensible Mrs. Woodfin cared nothing for this, even if she suspected it, which is doubtful. Neither did she care for the coldness and indifference of her sisters in the church, with none of whom, except Mrs. Dana and Mrs. Eaton did she have even a speaking

acquaintance. Often the only persons at church with whom she exchanged greetings were the elders. Mr. Barron would give her the tips of his fingers with a bland and condescending "Good morning, madam," meant to be very encouraging; and Mr. Colgrave would lift his hat to her in passing, with a grace and dignity that might have done credit to Chesterfield. And when his real or fancied ailments permitted him to be present, Mr. Dervitt would make a nervous grab at her fingers and mumble a hurried, "How d'ye do?" as he hustled past her in the aisle. Mr. Eaton never failed to shake her hand cordially and inquire after her family; and frequently he would escort her to her homely vehicle. She felt very lone and chill indeed when he happened to be absent from church. Even the pastor had seemed very indifferent to this obscure and unlovely sister, having visited her less than half a dozen times during a pastorate of fifteen years.

But she loved her God too well to neglect His public worship, and her church too well to leave its service for that of another; and so the faded and faithful old silk dress and bonnet continued at irregular intervals to present themselves among the costly and handsome toilets of the fashionable congregation at Beulah.

During his first round of pastoral visits, Herbert had called on her; and her sensible conversation, earnest piety and cordial interest in the church had impressed him most favorably. It would be difficult to describe the satisfaction and thankfulness with which this devout woman saw installed a pastor so intelligent, energetic and thoroughly devoted. She felt like exclaiming in the words of Simeon, "Lord, let now thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

The community in which she lived was not only a poor one, but notoriously ungodly; and the ignorance and wickedness of her poor neighbors was to her a source of much anxious concern. She had tried in vain to get them to attend church. Sometimes on the occasion of a "big meeting" at Pisgah some of them would go there; but the majority of them never darkened the door of a church. When Herbert's preaching began to attract large congregations, a few of them were induced to go and hear him; but many urged the distance, their want of a conveyance and their poor clothing, as a plea for staying at home.

So in order to reach them, Herbert, at Mrs. Woodfin's suggestion and invitation, commenced holding Sabbath evening prayer meetings at her house. Her humble friends did not mind wearing sun-bonnets and homespun clothes to a neighbor's house, only to a prayer meeting; and so a goodly congregation was soon gathered.

This so increased during the winter months, that in the spring the meeting place was changed to a large log school-house near by; and the young pastor commenced preaching every alternate Sabbath to large and attentive audiences. A Sunday school was organized also, and conducted with much success. Considerable religious interest was awakened, and a dozen or more persons united with the church.

These results, however, were not attained without a great deal of personal effort on the part of the young pastor, as well as the exercise of much tact and address. This community was so notoriously lawless, that a few years before the sheriff had scarcely dared to attempt the collection of taxes within its bounds. And, combined with the ungodliness of these disorderly citizens, was a degree of ignorance that rendered them almost unapproachable.

Mr. Lindsay, knowing the character of these domestic heathen, and

having a very poor opinion of Herbert's ability to protect himself, was at first careful to be present at the meetings, and also insisted on accompanying his nephew on his visiting rounds. He soon, however, found that his protection was not needed and ceased to feel any concern about the minister's safety. In the meantime, in his self assumed office of assistant pastor, he had some funny experiences, and collected a store of humorous anecdotes, which lasted him the rest of his life.

He was particularly fond of describing an apparition which startled the worshippers at one of the night meetings, and the consternation it excited among the superstitious congregation.

Living in sight of the school-house was a desperate old hag, who could not be induced to attend the meetings, but whose curiosity was strongly excited about what was going on there. So one rather cool moonlight night, the light from the window and the sound of the singing proving especially attractive, she threw a large white blanket over her gaunt form, and gathering it close around her grizzled hair and wrinkled face, proceeded to the school-house, and creeping up to a window, peered in. What she saw and heard so whetted her curiosity that she pressed nearer and nearer, until her long nose was flattened against the window and her cavernous eye sockets rested prone against the glass.

In her absorption, her heavy breathing became audible to those immediately inside of the window, and looking up they beheld the ghostly face peering upon them. A shrill shriek drew the attention of the whole audience to the window; and the panic became general. Seeing the commotion inside, she turned and fled precipitately through the woods.

Those who watched her flight, mistaking the flapping of the blanket in the wind for a pair of large white wings, declared that the apparition flew away through the air; and so there could be no doubt of its being a supernatural visitant. The hideousness of the object precluded the possibility of its being of an angelic nature, and so they were forced to ascribe to it a demoniacal character.

It was sometime before the frightful and mysterious apparition was explained by the confession of the old woman; and in the meantime, it became necessary to change the hour of meeting to the early afternoon, much to the inconvenience of the minister, who had a long ride from Beulah and Horeb to the school-house.

Mr. Lindsay took much pleasure also in relating Herbert's encounter with old Larkin Kirk, a notoriously ignorant and profane character. This creature was something of a miser and a most unscrupulous domestic tyrant. His cupidity led him to work his wife and children harder than any slaves in the community were tasked; and at the same time, his ignorance and stupidity were so great that he failed to direct their labor with any success.

Herbert had made several visits to his house without seeing him, as he was away at work, and the family dared not incur his displeasure by conducting the visitor to him. But one day he was fortunate enough to be met at the door by one of the younger children, who was so indiscreet as to inform him in answer to his inquiries that "daddy" was working in the "new-ground." Having upon further inquiry learned the direction of the new-ground, he proceeded thither.

Arrived there, he found Kirk busily engaged in felling trees and cutting them up into fire wood. He walked up to the woodman, and in his best manner and blandest tone bade him good morning; but the latter took not the slightest notice of the minister's greeting. Drawing nearer,

Herbert hazarded the remark that it was a pleasant day. This original and brilliant observation also fell flat. Approaching still nearer, he said in a raised tone,

"Mr. Kirk, if you can spare the time, I would be glad to have some conversation with you."

Still no response. Herbert observed, too, that the nearer he approached, the higher Kirk raised his arms and the wider swing he gave to his axe which began to fly fast and furiously in dangerous proximity to the young man's head. Deeming "discretion the better part of valor," he prudently withdrew to a safe distance; and concluding that such violent exertion could not be continued very long, he sat down upon a log and waited patiently until Kirk should be obliged to pause for breath.

His surmise was perfectly correct. The friction of the well worn helve upon the woodman's horny palms reduced both to a glassy smoothness that rendered his grasp insecure; and so he stopped, and resting the axe handle against his knee, proceeded to remedy the trouble by spitting into his hands and rubbing them very deliberately together, at the same time eyeing his unwelcome visitor with a cool and critical stare meant to be perfectly withering.

"You seem to be very busy this morning, Mr. Kirk," said Herbert, in a cherry, cordial tone.

"Yes," he replied in a dry tone, "I'm most commonly busy. Folks that makes a honest livin' by hard work generally has thar hands pretty full a minding' oo thar own business 'thout meddlin' with other folks' concerns."

"Industry is a very good thing," said the young man; "and it is very creditable to a man to maintain a family comfortably by honest labor; but it is not wise to spend our time and strength entirely in laboring for 'the meat which perisheth,' for 'man cannot live by bread alone.'"

"Look here, young man," said Kirk severely, "I aint got time to stand here palavering. Did you come after me this mornin' 'bout my business or your own?"

"Well, partly both. It is certainly in the discharge of the duties of my calling that I am here; and at the same time, I came with a view to benefiting you. I think I may honestly say that the prime motive of my visit is a desire to help you."

"Well, then, my clever fellow, ef you want to help me, the very best way you can do it is to pitch in and cut down these trees just as fast as possible. There's Jim's axe," pointing to one leaning against the tree near by, "that he left when he run to drive the cows offen the oats; take hold now, and let's see how bad you are spilin' to help a body."

Determined not to be routed and entering into the spirit of the joke, Herbert arose with alacrity, seized the axe and fell to cutting vigorously in the very notch where Jim had left off.

It was not the first time he had wielded this useful instrument. He and Russell Thornton had often gone 'possum and coon hunting with Dick Henderson and Isaac Johnson on chilly autumn nights, and to warm themselves would work by turns with the negroes in cutting down the trees. For in that free country, where forest laws are unknown and game laws a recent innovation, it is a common thing to sacrifice a fine tree to an ugly little "varmint" that nobody but a negro will eat.

Kirk was evidently non-plussed by this unexpected compliance on the part of the young aristocrat, as he had mentally dubbed Herbert;

and he was also no little surprised at the rapidity and precision of the young minister's strokes. Nor was he insensible to the absurdity of the situation; for a grim smile gradually parted his sternly compressed lips; and when they had both cut some minutes in silence, he threw down his axe, with a real horse laugh, and said good naturedly,

"Look here, young sir, ef you want to have any talk with me, I reckon we'd better go long to the house and have it out by the fire comfortable."

This invitation was readily accepted, and in the course of the conversation that followed, Herbert made known his mission, which was to try and induce the Kirks to send their children to the Sunday school. To this Kirk demurred, saying he had a poor opinion of schools generally; and he was by no means sure that a Sunday school would be of any advantage to his children. When invited by the young minister to go to church, he very emphatically declined for himself, but said that his wife might go some day if she wished.

When Herbert expressed the wish that Mrs. Kirk would give him the pleasure of seeing her at his church very soon, she said that she would be glad to attend church and had long wished to do so, but it was not convenient. When further urged, she admitted that the only obstacle, now that husband's consent had been gained, lay in the want of a Sunday bonnet.

"Oh! if that is the only difficulty," said the ardent young pastor, "it can soon be remedied. Miss Nora Wyndham is a very ingenious young lady, and very fond of millinery; she will make you a bonnet with the greatest pleasure. And I will engage to get it to you by Saturday evening, so that you can go to church Sunday morning."

So the matter was arranged; and that very day he bought at a country store such materials as he thought suitable, viz: two yards of purple silk, a quantity of blue and yellow ribbon, and a bunch of red and green flowers. These he took at once to Nora, with the request that she would make a bonnet of them for one of his female parishioners. And to explain the rather absurd request, he gave a narration of his visit to the Kirks.

Mrs. Lindsay and Nora were as much amused at his taste in millinery as Mr. Lindsay was at the account of his interview with Kirk; and they had a world of fun in constructing Mrs. Kirk's bonnet, which when finished was the admiration and envy of all her female neighbors.

In the meantime, as the weather became pleasant and the roads improved, the congregation at the school-house became so large that it was necessary to construct an arbor in front of the small building to accommodate the worshippers. During the summer, Herbert availed himself of the assistance of an evangelist to hold a series of meetings here, which resulted in so many accessions that the pastor and elders deemed it expedient to organize a new church at this place. So the decree went forth to erect at once a suitable church building.

Now ever since the parsons were paid in tobacco and had to go to law about that, money has been notably scarce in the Old Dominion. Perhaps to the absence of this element of corruption, the love of which we are told in the Holy Writ is such a root of evil, may be ascribed that primitive purity of morals which its modest sons and daughters claim to possess in a higher degree than do the more opulent citizens of commercial and manufacturing commonwealths. Be this as it may, hard cash has always been "as scarce as hens' teeth" within the fair domain

of the venerable "mother of States and statesmen"—and never so scarce in any particular locality as when there is a project of church building on foot there. The circulation of a subscription paper seems to have the effect of contracting the flabby purses to dimensions perfectly imperceptible to the naked eye.

Herbert's congregation had already expended a considerable sum in repairing the parsonage and repainting their churches ; consequently it was slow work raising the funds among them for a new church edifice. The generous young pastor headed the subscription list with a sum equal to one-fourth of the amount required. The contributions of Mr. Lindsay and Nora Wyndham amounted to another fourth, leaving but half of the needed fund to be raised by the congregation at large. To secure this, required much canvassing and soliciting, and a wonderful exercise of tact, patience and perseverance on the part of the collectors.

At length the money was raised, and the church built, but when nearly completed, it was found that owing to a wrong estimate of the cost, or a change of plan, there was a deficiency of about one hundred and fifty dollars.

This sum the ladies undertook to raise, and they proposed to make it by a fair and festival at Christmas. This proposition did not entirely meet with the approbation of the pastor ; but the fair sisterhood had already gained over the elders and all the male members to their proposition before it was submitted to him ; and so there was nothing for him to do but acquiesce. Moreover, Mrs. Dana silenced his scruples by assuring him that such an enterprise, by bringing the people together and making them better acquainted, would cultivate Christian charity among them, and increase their interest in the church and in each other.

I suppose that few things afford a more striking illustration of the ineradicable character of original sin than a church fair. The stinginess of some members, the duplicity of others, subscribing an imposing array of articles and sending in about half of them, and these of an inferior quality ; the consequential, dictatorial airs of those who wish to have the whole management, and the indolence of those who are not willing to do anything at all ; the jealousy and dissatisfaction of some who think that others are making a better show than themselves, and the sensitiveness of a few who imagine themselves slighted unless they are consulted about everything and flattered and made much of—all these things have to be met, endured and treated with as much tact and patience as possible by the heroic lady managers, whose courage, fortitude and self sacrifice in this trying ordeal make them approach more nearly than any other class of Christians to the martyrs of the early church.

Such was the conclusion of Mrs. Lindsay on the present occasion. Mrs. Dana and Mrs. Eaton, who had filled the position before and knew when they undertook it what was before them, tried to prepare her ; but she could not have believed that Mrs. A., with her means and social position, would condescend to contribute one small sponge cake and a half gallon of ice cream (?) made of skimmed milk ; nor that Mrs. B. could have the conscience to subscribe a ham, turkey, cake and bread, and send at the eleventh hour a poor, dried up joint of bacon weighing five pounds, so tough and hard that it could not be carved, far less eaten ; a little, late turkey, scarcely larger than a common chicken ; less than a dozen cup cakes, scorched nearly black, and a batch of rolls containing barely a quart of flour. Then the meddlesomeness of Mrs. C. and the airs of Mrs. D. !—she had not thought it was in them. However, in spite of all this,

there were enough generous, whole-souled people in the church to carry the enterprise through with brilliant success.

Nora's experience was far more agreeable. She had only to take charge of a table in the room containing fancy articles ; and she found no difficulty in loading it with the most beautiful and saleable goods on exhibition. Her abundant means and her taste and skill in fancy work enabled her to provide most of these herself ; and the generosity of friends outside of the congregation, including Mrs. Lanier, Marie and Eloise, supplied the rest.

Col. Wilcox gave the ladies the use of his house ; and a day of hard work, mingled with lively frolic on the part of the young people, converted the rooms into fairy bowers, so profusely were they ornamented with evergreens, paper flowers and a variety of winter berries, holly mistletoe, bamboo and pyracanthus.

Nora was present to assist in the general decoration, and especially to arrange and adorn her own table. Notwithstanding the gayety and animation of the scene, she was so strongly reminded of the last time she was in the house, the occasion of the Tournament, when Russell Thornton crowned her queen, that a throng of tender and painful reminiscences tortured and oppressed her heart. Noticing her silence and sadness, and at once divining the cause, Herbert attached himself to her, assisting in her work and striving by a tender sympathy and gentle cheerfulness to comfort and divert her.

The weather proved very favorable to the occasion. The winter had been so mild that, so far, there had been no snow. It was a moonlight night, too ; and through the clear, frosty air the stars shone with wondrous brilliancy. The ground was frozen, rendering the roads firm ; and so facilitating travel. It was the third day of the Christmas holidays ; and the community, fairly launched into a week of frolic and merry-making, welcomed such an occasion of general social re-union with delight. At an early hour the rooms were filled.

In the supper room, six ladies, all renowned housewives and mistresses of the best establishments in the community, assisted by their trained dining-room servants and cooks, had spread a banquet fit for the palate of princes. Two and three year old Virginia hams, baked or boiled, fifteen and twenty pound turkeys, stuffed with oysters and roasted to a turn, corned round of beef, baked saddle of mutton, smoked tongue, turkey and chicken salads, York river oysters served in every style, celery, slaws, butter and pickles, tea, coffee and chocolate, cold bread, as light as down and as white as snow, hot rolls and biscuits that might have graced a queen's table, formed the tempting *menu*. And for all these good things, the public were required to pay only one dollar.

Opening into the supper room was another apartment, tastefully adorned and brilliantly lighted. Here, numerous small tables ornamented with flowers and set off with the finest china, glass and silverware, were loaded with fruit, cakes, candies, jellies, ice cream, etc., which were dispensed by the fair attendants at reasonable rates to the groups gathered around.

But the most brilliant scene was afforded by the fancy bazaar, where the most beautiful and popular young ladies of the congregation presided at the sale-tables. This apartment was profusely adorned with wreaths and festoons of evergreen and pink and white tissue paper roses ; and the walls were hung with pictures and mirrors, interspersed with appropriate evergreen mottoes. The tastefully arranged tables, covered with bright

toys and rich and beautiful fancy articles, in every hue and shade of silk worsted, and the handsome dresses and pretty faces of the charming saleswomen, crowned the whole with beauty.

Except when she attended Mardi Gras in New Orleans, and a few evenings at the opera in that city, and in the capitals of Europe, Nora had not been to any place of public amusement or to any social gathering for four years. An occasional dinner party of relatives or intimate friends had been the extent of her social recreation during that time.

Her deportment since Russell Thornton's death had been that of a widow, and as such she had come to be regarded in the community. When, about eight months after her return from Europe, Theodore Walker attempted a revival of his attentions, he was repulsed with such indignant scorn that he never spoke to her again. And when a little later, Tom Harrison ventured to resume his jocular, but nevertheless sincere love-making, it was received with an air of outraged dignity that abashed him as nothing had ever done before, and effectually silenced him.

And so, although only twenty-two and as pretty as ever, she was, as Susan Matthews had lately said when discussing the affair with her mother "completely laid upon the shelf." That is, she was regarded by all the Coelebs in search of a wife as entirely out of the matrimonial ring. But although she had no avowed lovers, she had many friends. Independently of her beauty, her lovely character, charming manners and fine conversational powers made her very popular with persons of both sexes and of every age.

Her appearance to-night upon such a public occasion and in a position so conspicuous, the richness and beauty of her becoming and carefully arranged costume, her lively interest in the scene, and the unaffected gayety of her countenance and manner, formed the subject of keen interest to many, and occasioned considerable remark.

And to one at least this was not only a subject of keen interest, but of hope and delight. Herbert thought that at last her spirit-wounds were healing; and he began to cherish the hope that when she should be heart-whole, she might in time come to love him. He hailed her participation in the present entertainment and the evident pleasure it afforded her as a sign that she was learning to

"Let the dead past bury its dead,  
Act, act in the living present,  
Heart within and God o'erhead."

Nor was he mistaken in this conjecture. Time, the fell destroyer, which, in his character of iconoclast, has so much opprobrium to bear, is entitled to the grateful consideration of mankind for at least one beneficent office, the healing he brings with even a partial oblivion. Ah! a blessed provision of Providence it is, that new images crowd out the old until the former become but a shadowy memory without power to dominate and wholly cloud the living, acting present. By this natural process of healing, Nora's heart was beginning to recover its elasticity. Besides, a spirit of Christian resignation had taught her to cease grieving for the feast of happiness snatched so suddenly from her, and to gather up the fragments left and enjoy them with filial thankfulness.

She still had youth and health, a pleasant home, congenial occupations and society, many friends, devoted foster parents, and in Herbert the worthiest and dearest friend and brother. She felt that, with so many blessings left, further repining would be a sin; and so she was cultivating cheerfulness and content as a Christian duty.

But she did not entertain any idea of marriage. She had no thought of again making her debut in the gay world as a candidate for matrimonial attentions and admiration. Her lost belleship caused her no regret; and she saw, without a pang of envy, the admiration and attention lavished upon the young girls in the community just launched upon society.

The neighborhood belle at this time was Miss Eaton, who, having only left school last June, was in the flood-tide of her social popularity.

Nora had fully concurred in the public opinion of Carrie Eaton's beauty and general attractiveness; and this evening she saw with pleased interest the evidences of her young friend's popularity. Early in the evening, Mrs. Eaton had come to Nora's table to examine and admire the pretty fancy work it contained. Her daughter had not yet arrived, and the mother was besieged with inquiries about Carrie's absence and regrets at her non-appearance. First came a handsome and popular gentleman from a neighboring county, with the inquiry,

"Mrs. Eaton, where in the world is Miss Carrie this evening? She assured me she would be here, and promised to sell me a smoking cap of her own manufacture, for which I engaged to pay a fabulous price."

"Oh! Carrie is certainly coming," was the reply. "I am expecting her every moment. She would have come before this hour, but some visitors called late this afternoon, and that has detained her."

Presently came a levy of laughing girls and their attendant cavaliers, with the same query:

"What has become of Carrie, Mrs. Eaton? We are having such a lovely time; and we do miss her so much!"

These received the same response as the first comer. Next, a very bashful youth shyly approached, greeted Mrs. Eaton modestly, and after nervously fingering some fancy articles, ventured to remark,

"I hope Miss Carrie is not sick this evening; I do not see her here."

To him, too, the absence of the belle was satisfactorily explained. And so it went on, until Mrs. Dana, who was sitting by Nora, laughingly exclaimed,

"Well, it seems that Carrie is to be the chief attraction at the fair. I think we had better send a deputation to wait on her and request her immediate presence, or there will be a dispersion of the assembly, or at least the male portion of it, which would be just as bad, as they carry all the purses."

Just then, Herbert approached, and said with some concern,

"I hope, Mrs. Eaton, that Mr. Eaton and Miss Carrie have not met with any accident on the way. They are very late getting here."

"I hope not, indeed," was the reply; "and I do not think they have. Carry is very slow at her toilet, and her father is a very careful driver. Mr. Eaton will not travel fast over rough roads, no matter how great the emergency. I will go through the rooms, though, and see if I can get any tidings of them from persons who have come the same road they must travel."

So saying, she walked away, accompanied by Herbert.

When they were gone, Tom Harrison, who had been standing before a mirror near by trying on smoking caps and comforters, and making ridiculous remarks about their becomingness, turned to the ladies and said significantly,

"I tell you that's a serious case."

"What case?" asked one.

"The parson's."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, that Lindsay is dead struck with Miss Carrie Eaton."

"Nonsense!" replied, Mrs. Wilson; "Mr. Lindsay never thought of such a thing. In my opinion, he's cut out for an old bachelor. I never saw anybody so indifferent to female fascinations; did you, Mrs. Dana?"

"Mr. Lindsay cannot be called a lady's man," was Mrs. Dana's prudent reply.

"Nevertheless," said Tom, addressing himself to her, "you know he admires Carrie Eaton very much and pays her a good deal of attention; and I believe you think with me that he is really courting her."

In response, Mrs. Dana only smiled.

"How is that?" said Mrs. Wilson. "Do, Mrs. Dana, tell us all you know; for you know how much we are all interested in Mr. Lindsay's affairs, matrimonial and otherwise."

"I don't know anything at all, Mrs. Wilson, except that he goes very often to Mr. Eaton's, more frequently than to any other house besides his uncle's. But I have sometimes suspected, from certain little things I have observed, that there is some sort of understanding between them."

This discussion of the affair was brought to a close by the lady managers being summoned to the supper room.

People were now coming in rapidly, and the sale commenced and went on briskly, accompanied by a great deal of talking, laughter and lively badinage.

Herbert in love with Carrie Eaton! This was an entirely new idea to Nora, and she could not quite take it in. It startled her; and why she could not tell, it also troubled her. The thought of such a thing was far from agreeable or satisfactory. Herbert had always seemed so entirely her own property that the thought of some other woman coming between them and claiming his affections and kind offices, had never before entered her mind. The mere contemplation of such a possibility filled her with dismay.

Presently there was a great buzz and stir in the room. The crowd began to part, and all eyes were turned towards the door, as Carrie Eaton, charmingly dressed and radiant with youth, beauty, health and happiness, entered, walking between the two most eligible beaux present and followed by three or four others.

Smilingly returning the cordial greetings from every side, she walked gracefully across the large apartment to the place assigned her as saleswoman at the table with Julia Barron, followed by admiring eyes and the murmur of whispered compliments.

"Now isn't she a beauty?" said Tom Harrison, who was bending over Nora. "Her features are as regularly beautiful as those of the Venus di Medici or of the veritable old goddess herself. I don't believe there was ever seen such another perfect nose; I didn't think there could be so much beauty in a nose. And her lips! her teeth! such a smile! By Jove, she is perfectly distracting. Just look, Cousin Nora, while her head is turned that way—did you ever see such a lovely profile?"

"I have seen prettier girls," said Nora rather coldly.

"Well, I never did," Tom declared. "Pray who were they? and in what respect were they prettier? What fault can you possibly find with Carrie Eaton's features?"

"Her features are well enough, but I do not admire her style of beauty particularly. Black hair and blue eyes don't go very well together, I think."

"Well, that's just where I differ from you. Most people think that contrast of color one of her chief beauties ; it is so unusual. And what a graceful figure ! Just look at her hand and arm, as she reaches up for that watch-fob, and the sleeve falls away from the delicate wrist. I'd give fifty dollars for a cast of it."

"I do not admire her figure so much," Nora remarked. "True, she has pretty hands and feet ; but she is not tall enough for my taste."

"Not so tall as you are," said Tom, "but very nearly the medium height. I am surprised at your unfavorable criticism of our reigning belle, for I had given you credit for better taste. Besides, I have heard you say you thought Carrie Eaton beautiful."

"She is indeed a very pretty girl, Tom, but not faultlessly beautiful, and I have seen prettier women."

"I wish you'd bring them this way, then, I'd like to see them."

"I think it is just as well, perhaps, that you should not. As your head is evidently turned by Carrie Eaton's charms, a greater beauty might permanently destroy your mental equilibrium."

This coldness and causticity were so unusual on Nora's part that Tom was puzzled. Thinking that she was not in the humor for conversation, he took himself off, leaving her intently occupied in the rearrangement of her goods, which had been much disordered by the careless handling of purchasers.

An hour later, there was a lull in the busy scene, and a considerable thinning out of the crowd around the tables in the bazaar. The beaux had taken their sweet hearts in to supper and gallantly waited on them, seeing that all the dishes were offered them and that they were helped to whatever they chose. These devoted swains had, in the meantime, appeared to be taking some refreshment themselves, sipping a cup of coffee or chocolate and nibbling a little tongue and celery in company with the ladies ; but this was by no means satisfactory to the masculine appetite. So as soon as the fair ones were sufficiently refreshed, these Homeric heroes cunningly disengaged themselves from their charmers and repaired almost in a body to the supper room, to do full justice to the tempting viands.

Julia Barron, who had a keen eye for business, had taken advantage of the lull in trade to go and promenade with her lover in the hall ; and Carrie Eaton, who had done very little during the evening but flirt with her numerous beaux, was left in charge of their table. As there were now only ladies and a few old gentlemen in the room, she was quite disengaged, and sat listlessly looking about her.

Presently Nora saw her face, which was turned towards the door, light up with pleasure, and looking that way she saw Herbert entering.

His eye, roving around the room, encountered Carrie's glance of invitation ; and walking straight across to her table he seated himself by her side. In facing his companion, his countenance was turned partly away from Nora, so that she could not very well see its expression ; but Carrie's was turned full towards her and could be easily read.

They conversed in a low tone, and there was something very confidential in their looks and manner. Presently Herbert, bending still nearer, said something in a voice scarcely above a whisper, at which a glad light flashed from her eyes, a delicate flush suffused her cheeks, there was a softening and brightening of her whole face, a tender glow of love and bliss that was unmistakable.

Nora had but a partial view of Herbert's face. She saw that his

smile was glad and tender ; she imagined what sort of glance must answer the beautiful and eloquent eyes looking so confidently into his, and she could have groaned.

In a few moments, the entrance of a gay party of young people, who went to buy something at Carrie's table, interrupted this absorbing tête-à-tête ; but Herbert did not leave her side while she merrily displayed her wares, joining heartily in the jests and lively conversation of her customers. And when shortly after, Julia Barron returned to her post, he and Carrie went together from the room. As they passed close to Nora, talking earnestly together, there was a sudden lull in the lively chatter going on around, and she heard him say,

"I will consult your father about it this evening. I do not think it would be right to go any farther without his consent."

"Ominous language this !" Nora thought. "Tom is right in his conjecture for once in his life. They must be engaged."

Of the truth of this inference she received the strongest confirmation later in the evening. Col. Wilcox had surrendered his sitting room adjoining the bazaar to his particular friends, that they might retire there from the noise and bustle of the crowd to enjoy a cosy chat or a quiet smoke. Going thither to seek her uncle, Nora saw that it was occupied by several groups.

Some elderly gentlemen were seated on one side of the fire-place, earnestly discussing the leading political question of the day ; and several of the lady managers were sitting on the other side talking over the success of the fair.

The large mirror over the mantel showed her a couple seated apart in a remote and dimly lighted corner, behind the door, which she was holding ajar. They were sitting close together in a very confidential attitude. Another glance told her that they were Herbert and Carrie Eaton. At that moment, he was taking from his waistcoat pocket a small box, which he handed Carrie. As she received and opened this, there was upon her face the same tender glow Nora had before observed. Drawing from the box a glittering trinket, a ring, she slipped it upon her finger. Then with a glance at Herbert, half bashful, half saucy, and a look of unutterable happiness, she raised her hand and pressed the flashing gem lovingly to her lips.

Mr. Lindsay was not in the room ; and softly closing the door, Nora hastily retreated.

A little later, as she was sitting alone at her table, from which the beautiful wares had nearly all disappeared, Herbert joined her. He was looking very bright and happy, she thought, as he sat down close beside her and laid his hand lovingly upon her's, which was resting on the table before her.

"Well, Nora," he said, "you have had a busy evening, but a happy one, I hope. I do not think I ever saw people enjoy any occasion more than our friends here this evening. And besides the pleasure it afforded, the fair has been a decided financial success, the ladies tell me. You seem to have been fortunate in disposing of your wares."

"Yes," she replied, "I have developed quite an unsuspected talent for trade. I have quite a pile of money." And she playfully displayed the proceeds of her sales.

"But I fear you are very tired," he said, with concern, noticing how pale she looked.

"Oh ! that is of no consequence," she said, wearily and rather coldly, as she withdrew her hand from his clasp.

Closely observant and keenly sensitive, Herbert read dissatisfaction, if not displeasure, in her tone ; and he felt that he had received an undeserved rebuff. His countenance fell, as he said,

"I am very sorry indeed that the excitement and fatigue have been too much for you, especially as I fear you were induced to undergo it through kindness to me. I had hoped that the fair would afford you pleasure, and I thought at first you were really enjoying it."

"Don't trouble yourself about me, Herbert. I am used to disappointment and suffering. I am glad at least to see you happy."

But he did not look happy. The brightness had all faded from his face. Here was a wilting of the hopes which had budded with such fair promise only a few hours before. He could only explain the change in her manner by the supposition that the associations of the occasion had so revived painful memories as to re-open old wounds and bear her further away from him than ever.

Remembering, too, her treatment of Theodore Walker and Tom Harrison, he thought her present coldness and constraint had been called forth by his own ardor, the inadvertent and premature betrayal of the love he had never ceased to feel, and the hope he was beginning to cherish. And so he resolved carefully to repress and disguise these, that he might not again offend.

## CHAPTER XIV.

Late as it was when Nora returned to Ingleside, she sat long before the bright fire she found awaiting her in her room, pondering the events of the evening. She felt assured that Herbert was engaged to Miss Eaton, and she tried in vain to accustom herself to the idea and to become reconciled to this new turn of affairs.

"Surely," she thought, "he ought to marry. A nature so gentle and affectionate as his is eminently fitted for the conjugal relation. What a tender, sympathetic, devoted husband he would make! What a lovely home, what a happy family his must be, presided over by such a head! Yes, certainly he ought to marry; it would almost be a crime against society if he did not."

"And why should he not marry Carrie Eaton? She was beautiful, amiable and affectionate, a girl of average intellect and acquirements and pleasing and popular manners. A little pardonable vanity, a little harmless coquetry, were the very worst things that could be charged against her. Could he do better? Would not the young minister's family and friends be more than satisfied with his choice? Doubtless they would.

But his adopted sister was not. All her arguing failed to make her regard the matter with favor.

Then she tried to analyse her own feelings, and to discover why her heart did not sanction what her reason so fully approved. At length she came to the conclusion that it was because, with all her charms and merits, Carrie was not Herbert's equal. She mentally decided that Miss Eaton did not possess sufficient breadth of mind and vigor of thought to understand him and to satisfy the demands of his intellectual nature. Nor did she possess the depth of soul, the earnestness, tenderness and generosity necessary to fully appreciate and sympathize with his rarely noble, moral nature. She was not fit to be his life-long companion, the sharer of his thoughts and hopes and aims through all the years of earnest labor in the noble work before him.

And this, Nora honestly thought, was the reason she was so averse to their union. She felt aggrieved, too, that Herbert had withheld from her his confidence, that he had not given her the least hint of the state of his affections. Their intercourse had been so intimate, so unreserved, that she imagined she was sharing his every thought and feeling; and here, in the most important step of his life, he had maintained towards her the strictest reticence. That, too, when she had given him such striking proof of her confidence in talking to him freely of her sorrows, when she could not bear to have them alluded to even remotely by others. She felt wounded and puzzled at such behavior on his part.

Then she remembered that he had once offered her his love; and she thought that her rejection of his suit might have inflicted a wound upon

his self-esteem not yet wholly forgotten ; and that this might have deterred him from seeking her sympathy in this later and happier love.

She thought of that dismal evening in the library, when, almost without his volition, the story of his love had leaped from his tremulous lips. As she recalled the passionate fervor of his looks and tones, she wondered if he had so looked and spoken to Carrie Eaton. If so, and Carrie's heart had been unpossessed by any other image, what wonder that it had responded. For Herbert's love was a priceless treasure. How blest the woman who should be his wife ! And Nora sighed.

And Carrie Eaton was to be thus blessed. Why was it that this thought caused her heart to sink like lead in her bosom and a cold tremor to run through her frame ? Why was it, too, that towards Carrie, whom she had hitherto regarded with the kindest feelings, she now felt such a mingled repugnance and resentment ? Surely, as Herbert's wife, or even as his betrothed, she was entitled to the truest love and kindest consideration of his adopted sister. Then she remembered all she had heard of the reluctance of mothers and sisters to give up a favorite son and brother to the engrossing love and stronger influence of a wife. Thus it was with herself, she supposed ; still, she could not help feeling ashamed of the fierce intensity of her sisterly jealousy.

After Christmas, the winter set in in earnest. The cold was not excessive, but the necessary consequence of a comparatively mild temperature was a very heavy rainfall throughout January and February. The result was that the roads became almost impassable ; for the road-system in Tidewater Virginia is most aptly described by About in "*Le Roi des Montagnes* :"

"In this country (Greece), where man interferes but little with the work of nature, torrents are grand highways, brooks public routes, and trenches neighborhood roads. The storms perform the office of road engineers, and the rain is a road agent which has undisputed control of highways and by-paths."

The weather and the roads formed such obstacles to traveling that Herbert visited Ingleside but seldom during this time, Mr. Eaton's place, Spring Hill, being only half a mile from the parsonage, was much more accessible. He often dropped in there for an hour or two during the long winter evenings ; and of these frequent visits Nora did not fail to hear. Tom Harrison, who was a regular visitor at both places, took such interest in Herbert's wooing that he was very particular in chronicling and reporting the minister's visits to Spring Hill.

Also, colored Tom, Mr. Lindsay's dining-room servant, was courting Carrie Eaton's maid ; and frequently when Nora's maid, who was Tom's sister, went into her mistress' chamber in the morning to light the fire, she would entertain her with some such announcement as this :

"Tom say he saw Mars Herbert last night at Spring Hill. He peeped in at the parlor window through the blinds as he was going by to the kitchen ; and he say Mars Herbert certainly was settin' up close to Miss Carrie. An' she was lookin' mighty smilin' too. All the colored folks thar says they's goin' to make a match of it, sure."

When Herbert did go to Ingleside, his visits were very unsatisfactory both to Nora and himself. She tried to treat him precisely as she had done before hearing of his attentions to Miss Eaton ; and she thought that in this she was succeeding. But in spite of her efforts to the contrary, his quick eye and sensitive spirit detected in her manner a coldness and constraint that were very embarrassing to him. He thought she had taken

this method to warn him against a renewal of his suit ; and in his anxiety not to offend and his endeavors to set her at ease, his own manner, unconsciously to himself, became formal and constrained. And so there was action and reaction, gradually widening the breach in the free and devoted friendship which had been such a pleasure and comfort to both.

In the meantime, with the money gained by the fair, the new church, which had been named Ebenezer, was finished and furnished. The second Sabbath in February was set for its solemn and formal dedication to the worship of God.

This was an occasion of so much interest to a large portion of the community that, in spite of bad roads, a very large congregation assembled to participate in the exercises.

It was a happy day for Herbert. To see before him such substantial and precious fruit of his short ministry filled his heart with joy and thankfulness. His countenance shone with a deep and holy gladness. And in his delight his people, who had witnessed and aided his earnest and self-denying labors, warmly sympathized. It made them almost as happy as himself to see his intense interest and pleasure in the occasion.

And next to the pastor, no one enjoyed the event so much as his zealous coadjutor, Mrs. Woodfin. Her face was almost as radiant as his own. And wonderful to relate, she had honored the occasion with an entirely new outfit, and was looking so genteel in a new black silk dress and leg-horn bonnet that her friends scarcely recognized her.

This modern and fashionable toilette of the good woman was regarded by the public as quite phenomenal, and was considered by the young people of the congregation a much more wonderful affair than the founding and building up of a church. Much speculation did it give rise to, and many were the surmises as to how this small miracle had been wrought. The solution of the mystery was never reached. Mrs. Woodfin could not explain it herself. All she knew was that shortly before the dedication she received a box containing the dress and bonnet by the express, an institution of whose existence she had been until that time totally ignorant.

This unexpected gift was accompanied by an anonymous note in a strange chirography, begging her to accept the contents of the box with the kind regards of the donor. Mrs. Woodfin, who had never been a favorite of fortune, and who heretofore had found it necessary to render a full equivalent in labor or service for everything received at her hand, was amazed and overwhelmed at such an occurrence. She anxiously pondered the question who the mysterious donor might be. At last, she concluded that it must be the gift from a half brother of hers living in the South, and who she had heard, though she was not in correspondence with him and was ignorant of his exact whereabouts, was doing well at cotton planting.

Her independent spirit and her life-long habit of earning everything she enjoyed, caused her to hesitate about appropriating things received in such a mysterious manner; but as she could not possibly return them, and it seemed a pity that they should not be used, she concluded she might as well wear them.

The first time Herbert visited her after the receipt of the box, she informed him of the unprecedented occurrence and acquainted him with her scruples about appropriating its contents. He advised her to wear the bonnet and dress by all means, saying that no matter who sent them he could have had no motive for doing so but kindness, and that her acceptance would be the best requital she could make.

Then she demurred on account of the costliness of the articles. The bonnet, she admitted, was suitable enough, and came in good time, as the shape of her old one was entirely spoiled by the last wetting it had received coming home from church; but the dress was much too fine to be worn by a person in her circumstances. To this objection, he replied most innocently.

"Why, Mrs. Woodfin, I thought silk to be your favorite dress."

And she quite as incapable of comprehending a *double entendre* as he was of perpetrating one, answered in all simplicity,

"No, Mr. Lindsay, I never had but one silk in my life—my wedding dress."

When Mrs. Lindsay saw Mrs. Woodfin's new clothes and learned what everyone soon discovered about them, she told Nora that she strongly suspected Herbert of having sent them, and that the only circumstance which prevented her of being quite sure of this was the bonnet being so grave and chaste, so different from the flashy millinery he had selected for Mrs. Kirk. This, though, need not have inspired her with doubt; for he had heard her and Nora ridicule his taste and Mrs. Kirk's bonnet enough to learn what the correct thing would be for another middle-aged matron.

But the young minister's usefulness was destined to suffer a severe check. The very Sabbath after the dedication of Ebenezer, while on his way to Horeb, he was caught in a violent storm, a heavy rain accompanied by a high wind, and received a thorough wetting. As he could not change his clothing for several hours, he took cold, which brought on a serious attack of pneumonia. For more than two weeks he was confined to his bed, and during several days the physicians considered his life in danger.

During his illness, the anxious concern, the sincere distress and the kind attentions of his congregation gave flattering evidence of the high place he held in their esteem and the strong hold he had gained on their affections. This was very gratifying to his uncle and aunt, and helped to soothe their sorrow, as they tenderly watched beside his sick bed.

Mr. or Mrs. Lindsay stayed constantly with him, and Nora drove almost daily to the parsonage to see him. The sight of his suffering and the thought of his danger, so distressed her that she forgot the late barrier between them, and felt reconciled to his marrying Carrie Eaton or any one else, if only his life might be spared and his health restored.

Her tender concern and loving sympathy entirely dissipated the coolness and constraint which had so wounded Herbert; and the pleasure afforded by the agreeable change in her manner almost soothed his physical agony. To her restored cordiality, he responded so warmly that they were in a fair way to forget their recent estrangement, when a circumstance occurred which brought back all her reserve.

When she was returning home one day, Mrs. Dana handed her a letter which she desired her to leave at Spring Hill in passing.

"It ought to have been sent earlier," she said, "for Mr. Lindsay was particularly urgent about its going immediately, but I was compelled to send our only man servant to the store this morning, and so have not had the opportunity to execute his order."

Then she added with a significant smile,

"Now be very careful with it, Miss Nora, and be sure to deliver it safely; for I am persuaded it is a very important document. Although it was only yesterday that Mr. Lindsay was able to even read the letters re-

ceived during his illness, he would have himself propped up in bed early this morning to write that letter. I begged him not to attempt to write, but he would, saying that there was great necessity for his doing so. Then I insisted on acting as his amanuensis, but he positively declined, saying that no one could fill that position on the present occasion. If he wrote anything else besides this letter, I do not know what he has done with it, for this is all that I have been directed to see delivered. And so, you see, I have some reason for supposing it to be an important document."

While Mrs. Dana was speaking, Nora glanced at the letter and saw that it was addressed to Carrie Eaton in Herbert's hand writing. This sight caused her a sharp and sudden pang; and instantly all the trying emotions and disagreeable sensations first awakened at the fair at The Grove were revived in full force.

Carrie had seen the Ingleside carriage pass on its way to the parsonage, and she was watching for its return to inquire after Herbert. So as soon as it stopped before the door, she came out and ran down the graveled walk. There was an anxious, wistful look on her pretty face as she inquired,

"And how is dear Mr. Lindsay to-day?"

When Nora replied he was now much better and considered by the doctors quite out of danger, a glad smile irradiated her countenance, and she said earnestly,

"Oh! I am so glad, so very glad. We have all been so very anxious about him."

Then as she took the letter which Nora handed her, her eyes glistened with a look of tender and tremulous delight that made her more beautiful than ever.

For she was beautiful—regarding her closely and critically, Nora was forced to admit that. Her smooth brow where it met the jetty line of her silky hair was as clear and pure white as alabaster. Her limpid, dark blue eyes, with the delicately arched black eyebrows and long thick eyelashes, beamed with a glad and tender light. Her cheeks were like apple blossoms, and her lips like the heart of a deep red rose freshened with dew.

"Yes, she is lovely," said Nora to herself as she drove away; "and Herbert is such a worshipper of beauty in every form! It is not strange that she has captivated his fancy."

Then she thought of herself as she had been when he told her of his love. She saw the glow of her own early youth reflected in Carrie Eaton—the same bright joyousness and delicate bloom. But where were they now? Burnt out in the fierce fires of affliction and suffering. She felt that she was but the shadow of the bright being whom Herbert had loved. Saddened and faded, she could no longer hope to please and attract. Then for the first time in her life, she felt the pang of wounded vanity. And she felt too—she was plainly conscious of feeling—a mean and petty envy of Carrie Eaton's bloom and gladness.

As she realized this, she was shocked at her own weakness and malignity. Self condemned and humiliated, she penitently resolved to rise above such folly and sin. She would force herself to love and admire Carrie as the fair girl herself deserved to be loved, and as it was proper for Herbert's adopted sister to regard his betrothed.

But this resolution was more easily formed than carried out, as she found to her mortification and regret.

It was several days before Nora again visited the parsonage. In the meantime, Herbert, with the cheerfulness of convalescence born of the buoyant sense of relief and the activity of recuperating nature, was eagerly looking forward to her coming, hoping then to find the icy barrier that had risen so mysteriously between them quite melted away, and to see her again her old, frank, loving, confiding self. But he had not been in her presence five minutes before he perceived in her manner all the late coolness and reserve which had so chilled and pained him. And so when his uncle and aunt urged him to spend the period of his convalescence at Ingleside, he steadily declined, alleging some pretext which he deemed plausible, but which was far from satisfactory to them.

The trying weather of March proved very unfavorable to the young pastor. He did not recover his flesh and strength; and a troublesome cough still hung about him. When in April he became again able to fill his pulpit, Dr. Minns warned him against the danger of over-exertion, telling him that the labor he had been performing was greater than he could long stand in his most robust health, and that he was entirely unequal to its performance at this time.

But he felt his duties to be so pressing that he was reluctant to remit any effort in their discharge as long as it should be possible to fulfil them. Under his arduous labors, he was fast breaking down, when another exposure to the weather and a severe cold consequent, hastened the catastrophe. This time his throat became so affected that his voice failed, and his ministerial career was temporarily suspended.

Mr. Lindsay and Dr. Minns took him to Richmond for further medical advice. The physicians there ordered him to take a sea voyage immediately, to rest for a whole year, and to spend the next winter in a milder and more equable climate than that of Virginia.

So it was determined that he should start at once for Europe, and as soon as he had sufficiently recovered his strength, should visit Egypt and the Holy Land.

A minister from New Hampshire, Mr. Newcomb, whose health made it necessary to seek a warmer climate, consented to fill Herbert's pulpit during his absence; and as soon as this arrangement had been effected, he set about preparing for his journey.

His congregation did all that was possible to assist him in this; and for days the family at Ingleside were busied with all sorts of arrangements and preparations for his comfort and convenience.

When he had gone, his people felt a double responsibility to carry on the work he had so well begun, and so they did their utmost to strengthen the hands of their temporary pastor. This gentleman proved so able and zealous that the church scarcely suffered from the enforced absence of its regular pastor.

Nora's duties in the family and the church kept her well occupied; still, she missed Herbert sadly, and gladly hailed the weekly letter he sent to Ingleside. Heretofore, in his absences, his home correspondence had been addressed principally to her; but now it was distributed with perfect impartiality among them all.

He wrote fully and in an interesting manner of what he saw abroad and of his personal adventures and experiences. Nora, too, wrote fully of what was transpiring at home and of her own interests and occupations. But the same formality and reserve which for some time had marked their manners, crept into their letters, making them as unsatisfactory as their interviews had recently been.

Herbert wrote cheering accounts of his health. From the time he left Virginia, it had improved, until by Christmas it was completely restored. In June of the year following his departure, he expected to return to his pastoral duties. These tidings were received with great delight by his church, and they were eagerly looking forward to his coming home. At Ingleside little else was talked of.

Since he left Virginia, Nora had heard nothing further of his relations with Carrie Eaton. She knew he corresponded with both Mr. Eaton and Carrie, for she had frequently heard them speak of receiving letters from him. In the community, nothing had been said of the minister's attentions to Miss Eaton since immediately after the fair at "The Grove," when Tom Harrison had industriously circulated a report of their engagement. This rumor, however, had soon fallen flat, the public seeming to regard it as one of Tom's practical jokes.

During Herbert's absence, Carrie seemed to be as much courted and admired as ever; and she entertained her beaux as extensively and received their attentions with as much interest and pleasure as if her troth were not already plighted. From all that Nora saw and heard of her conduct during this time, she was forced to the conclusion that Miss Eaton was a sad flirt, and even less worthy of Herbert than she had thought her.

During the last month, rumor had spoken much of a young gentleman from Richmond, a Mr. Frank Harvey, who was very devoted in his attentions, and who seemed to be regarded with much favor by the inconstant fair one. But as Nora had visited Mr. Eaton's very rarely for some time past, she had not yet seen this favored suitor.

At last, one day when going to the parsonage, she met Carrie Eaton and a very handsome young man at the gate, just going away. The young gentleman politely held the gate open for the carriage to pass through; and Miss Eaton stopped her horse beside his, so that Nora had a good view of them. She thought she had never seen Carrie so beautiful as to-day in her closely fitting dark green habit, with her face flushed by the exercise of rapid riding. She perceived, too, that the blooming maiden was looking radiantly happy, and that she was immensely pleased with the society of the comely youth at her side, and was giving every possible encouragement to his attentions. Nora felt deeply scandalized. "Poor Herbert," she sighed to herself as she drove past the happy pair.

She had scarcely exchanged greetings with Mrs. Dana, when she inquired,

"Who is that handsome young gentleman riding with Miss Eaton this morning?"

"Oh! that is her beau—the favored one, I mean—young Mr. Harvey, to whom she is engaged to be married."

"Engaged?" repeated Nora, "Carrie Eaton engaged to Mr. Harvey?"

"Yes; hadn't you heard of it?"

"No; I am not in her confidence. Besides, Tom Harrison said that she and Herbert were going to be married."

"Yes, Tom thought he had made a wonderful discovery, and he took a great deal of pains, too, to let it be known. But I did not think any one except myself believed the rumor he set afloat; and I would not have paid any attention to it but for some circumstances I considered very suspicious."

"What were those circumstances, may I ask?" Nora inquired.

"Well, I had observed Mr. Lindsay and Carrie several times engag-

ed in what seemed to be very confidential tête-à-têtes, and on several occasions I had noticed that there seemed to be some sort of understanding between them. But what I considered perfectly conclusive, was something I saw that night at the fair at "The Grove." While I was sitting in Col. Wilcox's sitting-room, I saw Mr. Lindsay and Carrie seated in a distant corner engaged in one of those confidential conversations. I saw him take a ring from his pocket and hand it to her, a solitaire diamond, which she slipped on her engagement finger. You must have noticed it; it is such a handsome ring."

"You will admit that this looked very significant; and then that affair of the letter I gave you to leave at Spring Hill during Mr. Lindsay's illness, confirmed me in the belief that they were engaged. But I never was more mistaken; and I never before so fully realized how little reliance is to be put in circumstantial evidence."

"I agree with you," said Nora, "that the circumstances you mentioned were very suspicious. Pray how do you explain them?"

"Oh! Carrie has explained them very clearly. She spent several days with me last week, when she took me fully into her confidence. As you are a very discreet person and a friend of the family; and as she will be married as soon as Mr. Lindsay comes home to perform the ceremony, I do not think there is any impropriety in my telling you all about it."

"It seems that this young man, Frank Harvey, is a distant cousin of the Eatons and used to stay a good deal at their house before Mr. Eaton moved to this county. He and Carrie have been lovers ever since they were children, and she became engaged to him more than two years ago. He was always inclined to be wild, and during his last year at college, he became dissipated. Not long before he would have graduated, he engaged in some wild prank which led to his expulsion."

"Upon hearing this, Mr. Eaton made Carrie discard him, and wrote to the young man himself forbidding him his house. Young Harvey, though, contrived to see Carrie somewhere, made up the difficulty with her, and persuaded her to elope with him. By a strange accident, Carrie said, (but what it was she did not explain), Mr. Lindsay became acquainted with their plans. He remonstrated with her, and succeeded in dissuading her from this rash step. Then he saw young Harvey and obtained his promise to cease urging Carrie to such a defiance of parental authority, on the condition that Mr. Lindsay would intercede with Mr. Eaton in behalf of the lovers and try to get his consent to a renewal of their engagement."

"Mr. Eaton agreed to put the young man on probation, promising that if he would abstain from drinking all kinds of intoxicating liquors during one whole year, the engagement with Carrie might be renewed. In the meantime, the prudent father refused to allow them to meet or to correspond; but he consented that they might communicate with one another through him or Mr. Lindsay. It seems that they very naturally preferred Mr. Lindsay as a medium."

At Christmas, Mr. Harvey sent the ring I have mentioned as a Christmas gift to Carrie; but Mr. Lindsay would not deliver it until he had obtained Mr. Eaton's consent to do so. The letter I gave you to take her, conveyed the news of her lover's recovery from a dangerous illness. She was suffering much anxiety on his account, and Mr. Lindsay who had received a letter from Harvey the day before, was anxious to relieve her suspense as soon as possible.

So Carrie Eaton was to marry Frank Harvey, and not Herbert Lind-

say. How happy this announcement made Miss Nora Wyndham ! And how sorry and ashamed she felt when she thought of her recent discontent and uncharitableness ! She resolved that she would call at Spring Hill this very afternoon on her way home, and invite Carrie to go and spend a week at Ingleside very soon. And this very night she would write to Herbert, although his last letter had been directed to Mrs. Lindsay, and Nora was not in his debt. She wondered if Herbert and Carrie had seen in her manner any trace of the coolness and dissatisfaction she had felt. If so, how strangely they must have thought of her ! She must try by increased cordiality to efface all recollection of this unfortunate mistake and its consequences.

She was so very cheerful throughout the day, with so much playful gayety in her manner and conversation, that Mrs. Dana was surprised and gratified. And to some of her friends, soon after, she said that Nora Wyndham was more like her former self than she had ever hoped to see her, and that she really believed her young friend was at last recovering from the great sorrow of her youth.

Nora called at Spring Hill, as she had planned to do, and charmed Mrs. Eaton and Carrie by the frankness and affectionate warmth of her manner. To Mr. Harvey, she appeared so fascinating that he made Carrie quite jealous by his expressions of admiration after she had left. They, too, observed her buoyancy of spirit, and naturally attributed it to the restored health and expected return of her adopted brother.

When Nora, after leaving her wrappings in her chamber, joined her aunt in the library, seeing the unusual brightness of her countenance and the sprightliness of her manner, Mrs. Lindsay observed,

"You must have spent a very pleasant day with Mrs. Dana."

As the twilight deepened, she went into the parlor, and seating herself at the piano, began to sing, not the hymns and chants which for several years had composed her vocal practice, but a number of old songs, which Mrs. Lindsay recognized as Herbert's favorites.

At supper, with an animated play of feature and a vivacity of tone and manner which reminded her aunt and uncle of old times, she related an amusing anecdote of Mr. Dervitt, gave a ludicrous account of Tom Harrison's last practical joke, and told a laughable story about a courting adventure of Col. Wilcox. When tea was over, she excused herself to her relatives, saying that she wished to write to Herbert and tell him the neighborhood gossip while it was fresh in her memory,

As soon as she had left them, Mr. Lindsay said to his wife,

"I am always so glad for Nora to make a visit; it brightens her up so. We must try, my dear, and induce her to go out more. Her spirits are wonderfully revived by to-day's visit. I have not seen her so cheerful for years."

She spent the evening in writing to Herbert; and the change in her epistolary style corresponded to that in her manner. He had not read two paragraphs before he perceived and rejoiced in the restoration of the free, frank, affectionate style of "*auld lang syne*." But he did not trace this agreeable change to the matter of the concluding page of the epistle, until a letter from Mrs. Lindsay gave him the clew.

"I spent to-day with Mrs. Dana so pleasantly," wrote Nora. "The parsonage reminded me so forcibly of you. We talked about you a great deal, and rejoiced together that you are coming back so soon. We went into your study, dusted your books and arranged your study table as you like it to be. It all looked so familiar I almost imagined you sitting in

your favorite chair by the window. And oh! how I longed to see you there.

"On my return, I called at Spring Hill, and had a delightful visit. The Eatons are truly a charming family, and so devoted to you.

"I met there, for the first time, Mr. Harvey, Carrie's *fiancé*, and think him very handsome and agreeable. Carrie is a lovely girl, and I hope he will prove entirely worthy of her. Mrs. Dana had just told me the little romance of their rather chequered courtship, which interested me very much. It was very kind of you to help them with your wise council and prudent intercession, and just like your benevolent and sympathetic nature. However, you came very near getting yourself into a scrape by assuming the functions of Cupid's messenger (who would ever have suspected our steady-going, clerical bachelor of such an office?) for both Mrs. Dana, and myself saw you give her the ring that night of the fair, and we naturally concluded that you were plighting your own troth. Then, when you sat up in your sick bed to write to her, we were fully confirmed in our surmise. But Carrie, it seems, was not so fortunate as we thought her. However, she appears very well satisfied as matters are. And to tell the truth, *so am I*; for I do not feel prepared yet to give up my brother to a jealous and exacting wife."

The next morning after breakfast, when she and her aunt had sat down to their sewing in the library, Nora began talking of the events of the preceding day, and mentioned that at Spring Hill she had met a young gentleman to whom Carrie Eaton was engaged to be married. Then she related what Mrs. Dana had told her of the broken engagement and of Herbert's intercession to get it renewed. In connection with this, she mentioned the affair of the ring and that of the letter, which, in conjunction with Tom Harrison's assertion, had led her to believe that Herbert was going to marry Carrie himself. She said, in conclusion, that she had never been more surprised than when she heard from Mrs. Dana of Miss Eaton's engagement to young Mr. Harvey.

Now, the day he left Ingleside for Europe, Herbert had had a confidential conversation with his aunt respecting his relations with Nora. This was brought about by his depositing with her a will, in which he had bequeathed all his property to his adopted sister. In doing this, he alluded to his love for Nora and her rejection of his suit, the only time it had been mentioned between them since that fearful day succeeding Bratton's murder. He declared that, through all which had followed, he had never ceased to love her, and confessed that during the early part of the last winter he had begun to indulge the hope that she would one day lend a favorable ear to his suit.

Then he spoke of the sudden and inexplicable change that had come into her manner, her chilliness and reserve, which he could ascribe to but one cause. It was plain to him that she resented any demonstration of any other than a brotherly affection, and would be mortally offended by a proposal of marriage. And so he had now renounced all hope. He did not intend that, while he lived, she should ever have occasion to suspect how entirely and hopelessly he loved her; but should he die abroad, he wished his aunt to tell her of this, and to beg her to accept his fortune as the last and greatest favor she could do him.

Mrs. Lindsay assured him that she had for some time believed what she had long so ardently hoped, that he and Nora would yet be married. As for the coldness and reserve of her niece's manner, she had never perceived any such thing, and she believed that it was greatly ex-

aggregated by Herbert's nervous timidity, if not wholly imaginary on his part.

"I think," she added, "that Nora already loves you as you wish to be loved, but that she is herself unaware of the real state of her affections. She has not yet discovered that her tender, sisterly regard has ripened into a warmer and stronger love."

In conclusion, she said that she would observe her niece closely, and if she could discover anything favorable to his cause she would not fail to acquaint him with it.

With a view to sounding Nora, she had frequently led her to talk about Herbert; but she soon discovered that upon the subject of her adopted brother and his affairs, her niece observed a cautious reticence, which the aunt regarded as very mysterious.

As soon as Nora had told the story of Carrie Eaton's engagement, of Herbert's part in the affair, and of what she and Mrs. Dana had seen and believed, the scales fell from Mrs. Lindsay's eyes. To this solution of the riddle she was assisted by Herbert's having mentioned the fair at The Grove as the time of the beginning of Nora's coolness and formality. She had herself observed on the way home that night, and for several days after, that something was troubling her niece; but she had concluded that it was nothing more than the revival of painful associations. To make assurance doubly sure, she proceeded to cross-question her niece, beginning with the interrogatory,

"Well, when you thought Herbert was going to marry Carrie Eaton, how did you like it? What did you think of his choice? Were you pleased at the prospect of her becoming one of the family?"

At this direct question, Nora seemed somewhat startled. She hesitated for a moment; then with heightened color and an evident effort at composure, she answered slowly,

"No, I was not. Sweet and pretty as Carrie Eaton undoubtedly is, I do not think her wise and good enough for Herbert. I was not willing to see him marry her, because I feared that in such an intimate and life-long companionship he would not find the perfect congeniality necessary to the happiness of a nature so finely organized as his. And so I was glad to learn that he is not going to marry her."

"I entirely agree with you," said Mrs. Lindsay; "Carrie Eaton could not have been a congenial companion or a suitable wife for him. There is but one person in the world whom I consider quite worthy of him, in whom I am sure he would find perfect congeniality, and who could not fail to make him happy."

Seeing that her aunt paused, as if expecting some reply, Nora asked faintly, without raising her eyes,

"Who?"

"The only woman he has ever loved, and the only one, I believe, whom he will ever love—the girl to whom he told his love in this very room one dismal autumn evening nearly five years ago."

"O, Aunt Lucy," she exclaimed, with a look of alarm and mortification, dashed with indignation, "how can you speak of me in connection with such a subject, after all that has happened? Having loved as I have loved and suffered as I have suffered, how can I ever think of such a thing as marriage?"

"How can so many widows, who have been fond and faithful wives, give their hearts and hands again in marriage and be, to all appearance, as devoted and as happy in the second relation as in the first? Although

poor Russell was never your husband, you have already mourned for him longer than many a wife continues to bear the name of her dead husband."

"Herbert's devotion certainly deserves some reward. Think how worthy he is of happiness, and how happy you could make him. You ought to marry him, not only for his sake, but your own. You owe it to yourself, after all you have suffered, to accept what happiness life still offers to you."

"Owe it to myself?" repeated Nora; "how can I owe it to myself to marry Herbert?"

"Because *you love him*."

"Love him! I love Herbert!" she stammered, blushing scarlet. "What can I have done or said to make such an impression? How can you talk to me of love and marriage? You must not, dear aunt, you must never mention this subject to me again."

"Well," said the aunt, bending towards her niece and taking both of Nora's hands in hers, "I promise you that I never will, if you will look straight in my eyes and tell me positively that you do not love Herbert at all."

Nora looked up into her aunt's face. Her lips moved nervously, but no sound issued from them. But in her eloquent, truth-telling eyes, Mrs. Lindsay read the fullest confirmation of her hopes and wishes. Folding her niece in her arms and pressing the crimson cheek to her own, she said entreatingly,

"Listen to your own heart, my darling, and be happy."

Greatly agitated, Nora gently disengaged herself, and went hurriedly from the room.

Scarcely had the door closed behind her, when Mrs. Lindsay drew her chair up to the table, opened her writing desk, and commenced a letter to Herbert. In this communication she so thoroughly convinced him that Heaven had at last granted him the richest boon it could bestow, that the very next mail after its receipt brought Nora a letter from him containing a declaration of his unaltered love. Need it be said that her reply to this made him supremely happy.

When, early in the November following his return to his congregation, Mr. Lindsay announced to them that he would be absent from them during the coming month, but that he had made arrangements with a clerical brother to supply his pulpit during that time, there was some surprise, and even a little disapprobation, that after a year's absence he should be taking another holiday so soon. But when they learned of his marriage a few days after this announcement, the matter was satisfactorily explained.

The marriage of Herbert Lindsay and Leonora Wyndham at Ingle-side was a very quiet one, as was proper under the circumstances. For the memory of that bridal projected but never consummated, which was intended to be so gay and for which such extensive preparations had been made, was fresh in all minds.

As Nora assumed the sober grey travelling dress and bonnet which composed her bridal attire, she thought of the great trunk in the attic, where rich silks and sheeny satins, fine muslins, delicate laces and beautiful embroideries, destined to gladden an eye that never saw them, were now hidden away to feed the greedy moth or to moulder to decay.

And as Herbert made ready for his marriage, he thought of those miserable days at the seminary, when he was receiving accounts of the

preparations for Nora's wedding, and his heart was near to breaking with pain at his own loss, and his fears for her happiness in a union with one stained with such a crime and liable to so fearful a doom. The very memory of that time made his heart ache in the midst of his present happiness.

As he stood outside of her chamber door to receive his bride and conduct her to the parlor, where the minister was waiting to join them in a union which only death could sever, his thoughts were full of the dead friend whom he was supplanting.

And when the door opened for her to pass out, involuntarily his eye glanced from her to the beautiful and life-like portrait of Russell Thornton hanging on the opposite wall. Her eye followed his; then, as their eyes met, over the soft radiance illuminating both faces, there flitted the shadow of a tender and solemn memory. Nora's fingers instinctively tightened their clasp on his hand, and he bent over and kissed her.

The only guests at the wedding were Mrs. Dana and the Eatons. Two hours after the marriage ceremony, the bridal pair set off for the South on a visit to Les Grands Chênes. Marie Lanier was to be married a week later, and Paul had come home to the wedding, bringing his foreign bride, a beautiful English girl whom he had met in Paris, to visit her American relatives.

Some months before his departure for Europe, Herbert had commenced on the borders of his Horeb congregation a sort of missionary work similar to that which had resulted in the building of Ebenezer; and this, too, soon grew into a prosperous church. Then, the work proving too much for one pastor, a partition took place. Mr. Newcomb was called to the charge of Horeb and Salem, while Herbert retained the pastorate of Beulah and Ebenezer. Ingleside being convenient to his churches, especially to the latter, at the urgent request of Mr. and Mrs. Lindsay, he and Nora resided there. And throughout the Old Dominion there was not a happier or more fondly united family circle.

## CHAPTER XV.

When the plenty and prosperity of the year 1860 were celebrated in the Old Dominion by Christmas festivities even more bounteous and hilarious than usual, the great mass of the people found it hard to believe that the New Year so gayly heralded could be pregnant with ruin and misery. But although so many, steeped in the blissful ignorance of a false security, dreamed not of the fiery ordeal through which they were so soon to pass, there were many among our amateur as well as professional politicians who realized that the country was on the eve of a tremendous convulsion. Still, even the wisest of those who plainly foresaw the coming struggle between the North and the South, had no idea of the magnitude of the proportions it would assume.

But if the dawn of this memorable year found many in happy ignorance of the approaching tempest, the rapid and startling progress of events through its opening months soon enlightened the most obtuse. The latter part of April found Virginia a vast camp; and early in May, her highways were alive with bodies of armed men hurrying to the defence of her threatened frontier.

About the 10th of May, the quiet community around Ingleside was startled, and not a little excited by the passage of a considerable body of troops towards Williamsburg. Early in the afternoon a detachment reached Ebenezer Church, where they bivouacked. Shortly after the regiment had gone into camp, the colonel mounted his horse and rode away alone in the direction of the Chickahominy.

As he cantered on, often leaving the highway for by-paths and plantation roads, the negroes in the fields, the women and children at the cottage doors, and the travelers along the road gazed admiringly after the dashing officer wearing the showy Confederate cavalry uniform, and riding a superb chesnut-sorrel horse, which he sat with masterly ease and grace.

With a strikingly handsome face, and an erect, robust figure, presenting a rare combination of strength and grace, and displaying a finished horsemanship, this solitary cavalier was a flattering type of the Confederate soldier of that period.

His brilliant black eyes glowed with the spirit and power of the most vigorous manhood, and his face was youthful in its outlines and coloring; but the short curls protruding from his blue, gold-laced cap, the heavy beard flowing over his breast, and the thick moustache shading his proud, firm mouth, were iron grey.

As he rode along, the handsome officer glanced about him with a look of eager interest and lively recognition, half pleased, half painful. After proceeding a few miles, he entered the gate at Brantley and rode slowly down the avenue, looking carefully about him. But instead of entering at the yard gate, he turned aside into a plantation road leading across the fields

to the summit of a high hill, which overlooked the valley of the Chickahominy. Crowning this eminence, in the midst of a vast field of waving wheat, was the Thornton grave-yard, inclosed with a brick wall and shaded by cedar, holly, cypress and weeping-willow trees.

Close beside this, the colonel dismounted, and fastening his horse to the branch of a tree overhanging the wall, he stood with his arm thrown over the animal's neck, looking away over the wide, level valley before him. It was a goodly prospect—miles of wheat and oat fields and smooth meadow lands, whose fresh verdure contrasted well with the brown mould of the corn fields, where the young maize was just beginning to show in pale green rows. From this he glanced up to the deep blue sky with its soft touches of feathery vapor, then down where buttercups and wild violets were blooming amid the young weeds and grasses at his feet. Flies and bees were buzzing in the summer air, and in the trees around the birds were softly twittering and chirping and occasionally breaking into snatches of song.

The soldier's heart was all alive to the sweet influences of the scene. His spirit seemed deeply stirred; and his handsome features expressed an emotion too complex to be easily described. In a deep voice vibrating with feeling, he murmured as in a soliloquy:

"There was a time when meadows, grove and stream,  
 "The earth and every common sight,  
 "To me did seem  
 "Apparelled in celestial light,  
 "The glory and the freshness of a dream:—  
 "It is not now as it hath been of yore;  
 "Turn whereso'er I may,  
 "By night or day,  
 "The things which I have seen, I now can see no more.  
 "But there's a tree of many a one,  
 "A single field which I have looked upon,  
 "Both of them speak of something that is gone;  
 "The pansy at my feet  
 "Doth the same tale repeat:  
 "Whither is fled the visionary gleam?  
 "Where is it now, the glory and the dream?"

Then he walked slowly around the grave-yard, as if inspecting the condition of the wall, whose deep red surface was flecked with dark green moss and grey lichens, and which was thickly draped in many places with trumpet vine, wild grape and Virginia creeper.

Presently he came to an iron gate, which he essayed to open. Finding it locked, he knelt upon the turf, and parting the branches of the clustering vines on one side of it, he removed from the wall a loose brick, and took from a little recess behind this a rusty key, with which he unlocked the gate.

Walking reverently over the thick carpet of periwinkle and wild violets, he looked gravely about him. He did not perceive the evidences of neglect so often apparent in the private cemeteries scattered throughout that country. From the shrubbery—snow balls, syringa, mock orange and old-fashioned white roses, all now in full bloom—the dead branches had been cut away; and the dead boughs and leaves from the overhanging trees had been carefully removed from the ground.

He stopped beside a tall weather-stained head-stone bearing the name of Randolph Thornton, and, with folded arms and bowed head, stood reading the inscription. Then on a similar stone by the side of

this, but much newer and whiter, he read the name of Mrs. Isabel Bratton, who had died May 4th 1851, "In the full hope of a glorious immortality."

After regarding this reverently a few moments, he sank on his knees before it, and rested his forehead on the cold stone, while his broad chest heaved and tears rolled down his bearded cheeks.

When he had risen from his knees his eyes rested on a tall granite obelisk near by, and going thither he read aloud the inscription carved upon one of its sides:

"In Memory of  
Lieut. Russell Thornton,  
Only child of Randolph Thornton and  
his second wife Isabel Martin.  
Near Saltillo, Mexico,

This gallant soldier fell in battle February 20th, 1847. 'After a life's fitful fever, he sleeps well.'

Around the base of this monument was a border of pansies, and on each corner of the pedestal hung a withered wreath of lilac and other spring flowers.

The soldier took one of these in his hands and regarding it with a softened countenance, murmured,

"Whose work, I wonder."

Absorbed in his thoughts and emotions, he did not yet observe that other visitors were approaching. Slowly ascending the hill was a light rockaway drawn by a white mare, whose silky coat, flowing tail and symmetrical proportions gave as unmistakable evidence of her thorough breeding, as her bleared eyes and stiffened limbs did of her advanced age. This vehicle was driven by a well grown boy of between eight and nine years old, and beside him sat two girls aged respectively ten and seven. The foot of the carriage was occupied with a large basket of flowers; and all the space around this was filled up with mosses, ferns and wild honeysuckles.

The road was rather rough, and as the wheel ran into a deep rut and jolted them severely, the elder girl laid her hand on the rein and said in some excitement,

"Herbert, I wish you would drive more carefully; you will turn us over presently."

"I wish you wouldn't meddle so much with my driving, Lucy," was the response. "Nora never bothers me. No matter how many roots and mud-holes I go over, she sits as still as a mouse."

"Because Nora does not know any better; she is too young to realize the danger. Besides, when Nora is riding she is so busy looking at the trees and flowers along the way, and watching every bird and butterfly that flies across the road, that she never sees where the wheels are going."

"And pray what's the use of my watching the wheels?" said the younger girl. "Besides, I don't see anything to get scared at. Selene never kicked up in her life, and she couldn't run away if she tried. And even if the carriage did turn over, we wouldn't have far to fall. I fall as far as that any time, and it don't hurt much."

Who else could bear precisely these names, and who else could Selene be drawing about thus soberly in her old age, but the younger generations of Lindsays of Ingleside? If there were any doubt of this, the

striking resemblance of these young faces to those older ones we know so well, would dispel it.

Nothing is more curious than these family likenesses ; and the queerest sensations are often produced by observing in some young face the blended resemblance of two older relatives, as unlike each other as possible in physical appearance and as different in mind and disposition as oil and water.

Lucy was strikingly like Mrs. Wm. Lindsay, and also bore some resemblance to Mr. Charles Lanier. Herbert had most of his father's features, with Col. Lindsay's complexion and expression. Nora was the exact counterpart of what her mother had been at her age, except that she inherited her father's beautifully chiseled mouth, and something of his thoughtful expression when her mobile features were in repose.

Having reached the brow of the hill, they alighted and proceeded towards the grave-yard, the boy lugging the basket, and the girl sfollowing with their arms full of wild flowers. When they found the gate open, they were much surprised, and speculated in low tones as to how this had happened.

"Mr. or Mrs. Dashiell must be in there," said Herbert.

"No, they are not at home," Lucy replied.

"Then uncle Tom must have left it open that day he came to take the brush out."

Then they silently entered the grave-yard, evidently awed by the solemnity of the place, and walked softly over the vines and grass towards the monument of Lieut. Thornton. When they arrived there and saw the Confederate colonel standing beside it, intently regarding the withered wreath, they were greatly startled by the brilliant apparition.

At the sound of their approach, he looked up. He seemed as much startled as they ; and from the rosy group, his eye glanced uneasily towards the open gate. Seeing there nothing but the light carriage and sober old mare, he appeared reassured, and gracefully lifting his hat, said in a pleasant tone to the children,

"Good evening !"

His eye ran over the group with an expression of mingled interest and admiration.

Lucy was regarding his handsome face and dazzling uniform with a look of the most undisguised admiration. Herbert's restless, blue orbs, after glancing at the gold trimmings of the soldier's dress, fastened with delighted interest upon the sword at his side. Nora clung shyly to her sister, half hiding her face behind her huge nosegay of wild flowers.

To his greeting, Lucy replied with much dignity, and Herbert exclaimed,

"Oh ! you are one of the soldiers that Uncle Harry saw on his way from the mill to-day. I wanted so much to go up on the road and see them pass. But Nora was scared and cried, because she thought they were going to fight a battle and some of the people about here would get killed. But what did you come here for ? And how did you get in at the gate ?"

"What did I come here for ?" repeated the soldier ; "well, I was riding around a little to see the country, and I came in here to see these monuments. Is this the grave-yard of your family ? Do you live over there ?" pointing towards the Brantley mansion.

"Oh ! no ; this is the Thornton grave-yard. Our burying-ground is at Ingleside, where we live."

"Ingleside!" the officer repeated with emphasis, looking with tender interest from one of the young faces to another, until he had gone over the group scrutinizingly.

"Yes, Ingleside, the plantation of Col. Wm. Lindsay."

"And your names?"

"Herbert, Nora and Lucy Lindsay," replied the elder girl. "I am Lucy."

"And this is Nora," said the officer, kneeling on the sod and drawing the shy little maiden to his breast with one hand, while the other caressingly stroked the bright chestnut curls falling over her graceful shoulders.

"Won't you give me a kiss, pretty one?" he asked with a wistful tenderness in his glance and a pathos in his tone so touching to the child's soft heart that she placed both of her dimpled arms around his neck and pressed her rosy lips to his.

Presently he asked the children,

"What are you going to do with your flowers?"

"We brought them to dress Lieut. Thornton's monument."

"Was Lieut. Thornton a relative of yours?—an uncle or cousin?"

"Oh! no, the Thornton's are not our relations. He was a very dear friend of our father and mother; we never saw him. He went away to Mexico and got killed before any of us were born."

"Did you place these here?" asked the colonel, pointing to the withered wreaths.

"No, mother and Mrs. Dashiell put them there when they were having the grave-yard cleaned up this spring. Mother and father come here and bring flowers several times every year. Mother always comes in May, when the roses first bloom, and dresses this monument."

"And to-day she sent you?"

"Yes, sir, that is, she said we might come and dress it this time, as she is not at home. She and father and Uncle William are all with Aunt Lucy, who is very sick in Richmond."

"Well, don't let me interfere with your pious labor: I like to see the memory of the dead honored, especially that of a brother soldier. Gen. Taylor's soldiers had a hard time in Mexico, as I well know, having been one of them."

"You?" exclaimed the boy. "Have you fought in a real, sure enough battle? How many men did you kill? Do please tell me all about it."

"It is too long a story for this evening, my little man. Besides you are likely to see enough of war yourself very soon."

Then the children began to arrange the flowers upon the monument, Lucy and Herbert placing the wreaths and bouquets they had brought upon the pedestal, and Nora persistently sticking fronds of fern and sprays of wild honey-suckle amid the rare roses that had grown at Ingleside.

"I think you are very partial, to place all your flowers on one tomb," said the soldier, when he had watched them awhile. "I believe I will try my hand in decorating those you are slighting."

"So saying, he gathered a handful of the white roses growing within the inclosure, and placed them upon the graves of Randolph Thornton and Isabel Bratton.

While Lucy was giving the finishing touches to their work, indeed undoing and doing over Herbert's part of it, her brother went up to the

soldier, and after gazing wistfully at his sabre, began to finger the hilt, saying,

"And this is what you fight the Yankees with. Let me see how you are going to cut their heads off."

With a smile, the officer drew his sword and made a few passes at an imaginary enemy. Herbert's eyes followed the flashing blade as those of the charmed bird follow the movements of the serpent; but Lucy's cheek grew pale, and little Nora, with a cry of terror, ran and hid behind the monument.

"You see your sisters do not like the looks of cold steel," he said as he sheathed his weapon.

"Oh! girls are *such cowards*," exclaimed the boy in a tone expressive at once of a full sense of masculine superiority and a profound contempt for feminine insignificance.

Then, still playing with the tempting scabbard, the talkative boy went on.

"They are bad people, these Yankees, to come down here and kill our men and burn our houses and steal our things. I would like to fight them myself, only I don't know what such a little boy as I could do. Unless—yes, I think if I had a sword like this, I could stand behind a bush on the road-side and cut off some of their legs as they marched by."

At this martial conceit, the colonel laughed aloud. His ringing laugh was so contagious that Lucy and little Nora joined in it; and the latter, catching the kindly, merry gleam of his fine eyes, was emboldened to approach and timidly offer him a small bouquet of heart's ease she had gathered beside the monument.

With hearty thanks, he took them and placed them in his button-hole. Then bending down, he again kissed the little girl, and stood some moments holding and caressing her small hand, and looking into her pretty blue eyes with such an expression as she often saw on her own father's face.

"Where do you soldiers sleep?" asked Herbert. "You don't have houses to stay in, do you?"

"We stay in tents when in camp; but when on the march we sleep in the open air. I shall sleep out of doors to-night."

"Out of doors!" exclaimed Lucy; "just suppose it should rain!"

"It would be uncomfortable, certainly."

"Bring your men to Ingleside," said Herbert cordially. "We have a large house and a great big barn. Then there are the laundry, the weaving-house, the carriage-house and ever so many places they could stay in better than out of doors. I am sure we could find room for them all; couldn't we, Lucy?"

"I think so; at any rate, we would try."

"You are very kind," said the officer, smiling at this display of wholesale hospitality. "Pray are you young people doing the honors of the establishment while your parents are away? I mean are you keeping house at Ingleside now?"

"No sir; Miss Nancy Jones is the housekeeper; but she wouldn't care. She lets us do almost anything we choose. Father and mother left directions with the overseer and housekeeper both that if any soldiers came to Ingleside while they are gone, they should have everything they wanted. And I know they would like us to have you spend the night."

"And I should like very much to spend the night with such kind and hospitable little people; but my men will march by dawn to-morrow

morning, and I must be in camp to-night. I will ride home with you, though, and then go on to the church ; for it is too late for such young folks to travel alone. You see the sun has set."

"So it has," said Lucy in dismay. "I did not think it was sunset already. We were too late starting. Herbert, it was your fault that we did not get off earlier. When I and Nora were all ready with our bonnets on, we had to wait for you."

"Well," said Herbert, "didn't you make me stop nearly half an hour when we met Mr. Eaton's carriage, to talk to Carrie and Bessie Harvey. And didn't I have to stop three times besides that to gather flowers and ferns for Nora, and once for her to get out and catch a butterfly ? Was that my fault too ?"

"Never mind," said the officer, "whose fault it was. Let us be going, for the people at home will be uneasy about you."

"Oh ! they send to meet us always when we are late. I reckon Uncle Tom is at the creek by now."

Sure enough, they had not gotten more than half way home when they were met by a likely, well-dressed man-servant on horseback, who, after lifting his hat to the officer with the polite salutation, "Sarvant Marster," accosted the children thus :

Lor, chillun, what does you all mean by pokin' 'bout in the dark this way. With that stiff old mare, too, and young Mars Herbert gwine over all the stumps and into all the rucks in the road. The whole gang of you'll git your necks broke some of these days."

Up to this time, the officer had ridden close beside the carriage, engaged in an animated conversation with the garrulous occupants, whom he led by adroit remarks and indirect questions to speak freely of themselves, their home and family. But as soon as Tom joined them, he surrendered them to the care of the servant, falling at once some distance in the rear, and maintaining a profound silence the rest of the way.

When he was bidding the children goodbye at their own door, they again invited him to spend the night. He declined, but said he would go in and get a glass of water. So throwing his bridle to Tom, he dismounted and followed the children into the house. Lucy led the way into the library and invited him to be seated, while Herbert went to order fresh water.

Declining the offer of a seat, the colonel walked straight to the mantel, and looking at the handsome portrait hanging above it asked,

"Is this your father's portrait?"

"No, sir, that is the portrait of father's friend, Lieut. Thornton, the soldier whose monument you saw at Brantley. "Here," said Lucy, pointing to the opposite wall, are portraits of father and mother painted by Cousin Paul Lanier last summer, when he was visiting us."

He took the lamp from the table, and holding it under each picture in turn, stood some moments contemplating the faces. The robustness and self-possession of middle age were very becoming to Herbert. And the subtle and mysterious chiseling of the mind and soul upon the features, which, as the years go by, make or mar so many countenances, had wrought his to the highest order of beauty. None could behold it without pleasure and admiration.

Time had dealt equally well with Nora. Her mature, matronly beauty quite fulfilled the promise of her girlhood. Her intelligent and amiable countenance was particularly noticeable for its expression of sweet and tranquil content.

Without a word of comment; the officer put down the lamp, quaffed a goblet of the ice water the servant proffered, and was preparing to depart, when Lucy said shyly.

"You have not yet told us your name; and I am sure father and mother will wish to know it when we tell them of having met you."

In reply, he silently took a visiting card from his waistcoat pocket and handed it to her. As soon as he had left the room, Herbert and Nora crowded about her to read the name printed on it:

"Col. Robert Trevelyan."

When the officer received his bridle rein from Tom, he slipped a coin into the negro's hand, bowed his adieu in silence, then nervously striking the spurs into his horse, galloped away along a footpath which led across the field to a plantation road that, at no great distance, opened upon the public road to Ebenezer.

Tom stood looking after him some moments, absorbed in wonder at such apparent familiarity with the country on the part of a stranger. Then peering through the dusk at the money he had received and catching its yellow gleam, he muttered in profound disgust,

"I did think sich a grand lookin' gentman and ridin' a horse like that, would a been above givin' a servant a cent."

But upon repairing to the dining room, where the lamps were lighted, another look at the money caused him to change his tune:

"Good gracious! he cried; ef this aint luck sure nuff. That handsome soldier man done give me five dollars jest for holdin' his horse ten or fifteen minutes. He must 'a took it for a quarter in the dark; but its all the same to me, for I don't reckon he'll have time to come back arter it."

Then as the housekeeper came in from the pantry, he said, rubbing his forehead with his fist as if to brighten his memory:

"I clar, Miss Jones, that gentman that come home with the chillun this evenin is the very moral of somebody I've saw somewhar; but to save my life I can't mind who 'tis. Pear to me 'tis somebody I used to know mighty well long time ago. I 'bieve my rickollection's done been givin' way ever since I had that dreadful spell of fever that time Mars. Herbert and Miss Nora both on um like to 'a died. Marster tells me sometimes that I aint had no sense since; and I do 'bieve tis a fack."

A year had passed by, a year of war, and so of anxiety, terror and distress. But although other sections of Virginia had been devastated by the invading foe and convulsed with the horrors of battle, the brave little army of Gen. Magruder, with its admirable line of fortifications stretching from the York to the James, had kept the foe at bay and the vicinity of Ingleside had seen nothing of war except the occasional passing of Confederate soldiers. But in the spring of '62, Gen. McClellan transferred his army from the Potomac to the Peninsula; and Gen. Johnston's went to the support of Magruder.

These military movements naturally spread terror through the peninsula; and many of the citizens fled from their homes to avoid contact with the enemy, taking refuge in Richmond and points beyond that city.

Mrs. Lindsay, whose health was still so delicate that she was almost constantly under the treatment of an eminent physician in Richmond, upon the first news of the Federal advance, left Ingleside for a safer and more quiet locality. Her husband and the two older children of her niece accompanied her. Herbert and Nora remained at home to protect their

property, as far as they could, and they kept their youngest child with them.

When it became known throughout the lower peninsula that the Confederate army had abandoned its strong line of defences and was falling back towards Richmond, alarm and distress drove the luckless inhabitants to a fresh exodus. The roads were filled with terror-stricken citizens fleeing before the advancing tide of battle, whole families, including feeble age and tender youth, abandoning their happy and comfortable homes, to seek shelter among strangers and endure the untold hardships and privations of the refugee.

And following fast on the heels of this doleful procession, was the van of the retreating army, with its long lines of artillery and baggage trains toiling through the mud and mire of the abominable country roads.

Suddenly, in the midst of the retreat, the air was shaken by the sound of guns, not the scattering fire of skirmishing, but the steady roar of battle. All day long, this terrible thunder shook the earth; and early the next morning, columns of the retreating army brought news of the battle of Williamsburg, on the 5th of May.

Soon the wounded began to pass—trains of wagons and ambulances, with their ghastly, writhing loads of humanity, making their way slowly and painfully towards Richmond. At convenient points along the roads, such citizens as had not fled the country stationed themselves with provisions and water for the refreshment of these compatriots. Foremost among these was Herbert, while Nora at home was busied all day long in preparing and dispatching to him fresh supplies of food and drink.

That evening, while she was thus engaged, she saw an ambulance, driven by a negro and followed by a single soldier on horseback, approach the house. She immediately surmised that one of her many relatives in the Confederate army was being brought to her dead or wounded. Paul Lanier's regiment had passed Ingleside only a few weeks before on its way to the front; and she greatly feared that he was the occupant of the slowly moving, funereal looking vehicle. Much agitated, she advanced to meet the soldier who was riding beside the ambulance.

She had scarcely time to observe that the man reclining in it, with his hat drawn down over his brow and the lower part of his face covered with a cambric handkerchief, wore the uniform of a cavalry officer, when the soldier in attendance, after giving the military salute, accosted her:

"My commanding officer madam, Col. Trevelyan, who was severely wounded at Williamsburg yesterday, directed me to bring him here and request that you will give him quarters awhile, as the nature of his wound will not admit of his travelling farther. For any trouble or expense his sojourn may occasion, he will, of course, make remuneration."

"We will be happy to receive Col. Trevelyan and to render him every needed attention; but you must not speak of remuneration. The suggestion of remuneration for any service rendered to a Confederate soldier, is regarded by a Virginia woman almost as an insult. I have a chamber already prepared, and I will send some of the men-servants to assist in taking him into it."

The wounded man was tenderly borne into the chamber formerly occupied by Herbert, the wing room opening into the library, and laid upon the very bed where Herbert, in his delirious ravings, had disclosed his knowledge of Russell Thornton's crime.

As soon as he was placed upon the bed, he gave the soldier an order in a low tone, when the latter closed the shutters and drew the curtains,

making the room quite dark. Still, as if the little light there was was hurting his eyes, the officer lay with his arm thrown across his face, leaving exposed to view only the upper part of his forehead and his mouth, nearly hidden by the heavy gray moustache.

Soon after the arrival of Col. Trevelyan, Herbert returned home. He went immediately to the chamber of his wounded guest, to see what further could be done for his comfort. When he entered, he found the officer lying perfectly still in the position just described, and breathing heavily, apparently in a deep sleep.

Seeing this and fearing to disturb his repose, the kind host saluted the soldier in a subdued tone and invited him to accompany him into the library, that he might make some inquiries about the condition and needs of the wounded officer.

To his inquiries, the man replied that the colonel had been shot in the body, and that the surgeons had not been able to find the ball or trace the exact course it had taken ; but from the quantity of blood he had lost, the intense pain he suffered and the great shock to his nervous system, they regarded his hurt as very serious. They had opposed his removal from the field ; but he would not consent to be left behind to fall into the hands of the enemy. He said he felt quite sure that his wound was mortal, and he wished to die among his own people. And so he had been allowed to have his way.

The soldier added that his officer, before falling asleep, had ordered him, as soon as he had had some rest and refreshment, to return to his command, saying that the regiment needed him and that the colonel's servant, who had driven the ambulance, could render him all the service he needed.

In this arrangement Herbert concurred, telling the soldier that he and his family would gladly render to the wounded officer every necessary attention. He would send at once for the nearest physician, and would himself assist in nursing Col. Trevelyan.

"I regret," he remarked, "that we cannot get better medical advice, but in the disturbed state of the country this is impossible. Our family physician, in whom we had great confidence, died six months ago, and the young man who has taken his practice is almost a stranger to us. However, before coming here, he spent a good deal of time in the Richmond hospitals, and so ought to know something about surgery."

When the soldier had eaten and had his haversack filled with the best in the larder, he rode away to join his regiment.

Shortly after he left, supper was announced, and while they were at the table, the servant returned with a message from the doctor that he could not visit Col. Trevelyan that night, as he was engaged with a very ill patient.

From the supper table, Herbert went to the officer's chamber, to sit with him while his man was eating his supper.

The wounded man lay precisely as he had left him ; and so walking softly across the room, he seated himself some distance from the bed. Presently the patient stirred, uttered a stifled groan, turned on his back and threw the arm from his face. Herbert started towards him, but seeing that he again became still and seemed to be asleep, he resumed his seat.

A few moments later, Nora entered the room, went softly up to the bed and looked down at the pale face lying on the pillow. Herbert saw her start violently, then she turned to him with the strangest expression

he had ever seen, a blending of awe, perplexity, distress and piteous appeal.

In a moment he was at her side, his arm around her trembling form, and his hand clasping hers, while his eye anxiously asked the cause of her uneasiness.

"Such a likeness!" she whispered in response.

Low as was her tone it aroused the sleeper. He opened his splendid eyes, now heavy with weariness and pain, and glanced from one to the other. Then he put out his hands, clasped their joined hands in both of his, and in a voice that startled them as only a voice from the grave could have done, said,

"Dear friends, I have come to die among you."

"Nora's head drooped upon her breast, and Herbert felt her form slipping away from him. Throwing both arms around her, he bore her into the library.

For several days past, she had been in a state of excitement and anxiety on account of the military movements in the vicinity; and during the whole of to-day, her sympathies had been keenly excited by the sufferings of the wounded who were passing, and her physical strength taxed to the utmost in efforts to relieve them. Her nerves all unstrung and her strength exhausted, this shock had entirely overcome her.

In the greatest alarm, her husband, who had never seen her swoon before, laid her on a sofa under the open window, and fanned her and bathed her face and hands in cologne until consciousness returned. Then he assisted her to her chamber, and went to bring her a glass of wine. When she had drunk this, she dismissed him, saying,

"Go back to him, dear Herbert; it looks strange our leaving him this way; and I fear he may not understand it. I am well now and do not need you—but he, oh! how ghastly and suffering. Let us do all we can for him—for it cannot be long that he will need our care. I will try to sleep now; and to-morrow you may tell me the explanation of this mysterious resurrection."

When Herbert went back, he found the wounded officer lying with his face turned towards the door and his large, bright eyes fixed anxiously on it. As he entered, the colonel rose from his pillow, held out his arms, and in a voice of inexpressible tenderness and pathos uttered the single word,

"Bertie!"

In a moment, Herbert was in his outstretched arms, his own arms clasped about the soldier's neck, their bearded cheeks pressed together and their tears mingling in a copious shower.

When the wounded man had somewhat recovered his composure, he said,

"Come Bertie, lie down here beside me, and let me hold your hand as we have so often lain right here and slept in the halcyon days of auld lang syne; and I will try to tell you what has befallen me since I saw you last, and how and why it is that I have so long permitted you to believe me dead."

And in as few words as possible, with many breaks and pauses, Russell Thornton told his friend not only what has been recorded of his adventures in Mexico, but of his career subsequent to that time.

After many difficulties and hardships, he had succeeded in joining Gen Kearney's command, and with it had assisted in completing the conquest of California. In that favored land, he had remained after the close

of the war; and he was among those fortunate adventurers who reaped such a golden harvest in the famous '49. With the fruits of one year's successful mining, he had purchased California mining stocks and Texas lands; and these judicious investments had brought him greater wealth than any of his name and family had ever possessed.

As soon as he had been able to do so, he had gone to Mexico to visit Don Canales and his family, and remunerate them for their kindness. He found these kind friends much reduced in fortune by the disastrous results of war, and was able to render them valuable service. Don Meréja had been killed in one of the engagements before the city of Mexico, and his young widow was residing with her parents.

"She was a lovely woman," said Russell, "as amiable and gentle as she was graceful and beautiful. From the time I first met her, I greatly admired and esteemed her; and as a widow I thought her more charming than ever. But I had no idea of marrying until I accidentally discovered that she loved me. I was too lonely and friendless not to appreciate such affection and not to desire to possess such a heart and secure such companionship as hers. And so I made her my wife. I loved her, though not with the absorbing, passionate devotion of my first love. A man can love but once as I loved Nora Wyndham. Still, the four years of my married life brought me more happiness than I dared to hope existence could yield me.

"While on a visit to her relatives in Spain, she died of an epidemic disorder prevailing in the town where we were sojourning. And two weeks after her death, I laid beside her our only child, Herbert Wyndham, a beautiful boy of two years old. Since that sad time, I have travelled a great deal up and down the world, without any special object in life. I was in Russia when I heard of the organization of the Confederate government in Montgomery, and I hastened home to offer my sword to the South.

"I stopped in this neighborhood about a year ago as your children may have told you, and met them in the graveyard at Brantley, where I had gone to visit my mother's grave; for through the Richmond papers, to which I was a regular subscriber while in America, I learned of her death, your marriage, and many other items of home news.

"I cannot tell you, dear Herbert, how deeply I was touched at finding that you and Nora remembered me still, and so kindly honored my memory. And I cannot express how fondly I was drawn to your dear children."

"Yes," said Herbert, "the children lost no time in telling us of their meeting with you. They were perfectly captivated with the handsome officer who so kindly escorted them home from Brantley. Whenever I went to preach to the soldiers of Magruder's command, as I did frequently during the past year, they begged me to seek out Col. Trevelyan and make his acquaintance. I endeavored to do so, but was so unfortunate as not to meet you. Sometimes you were on duty in the front, and sometimes you were in Richmond. And once, you may remember, when I called on you in your tent, you declined to see me on account of illness."

"I remember it very well," said Russell. "I was not well, and I made it an excuse for not admitting you. I feared to meet you, lest you might recognize me. I was anxious to see you and your family and other friends here, and to learn all that I could about you; but I would not

have made myself known to you if I had not been wounded and felt that my days are numbered. You remember Bertie those old lines,

“On some fond breast the parting soul relies,  
“Some pious drops the closing eye requires,  
“E’en from the tomb the voice of nature cries,  
“E’en in our ashes live their wonted fires.”

“How true they are. When we are going out of the world, we cling most fondly to what we have known of love in it; and our human ties never seem so strong as in the moment of dissolution. As I lay on the battle-field, expecting momentarily to breathe my last, it seemed to me that it would take half the sting from death to have the dear friends of my youth smooth my dying pillow; and so I came to you.”

It was near dawn before Russell sank into a heavy sleep, produced by the opiates with which the surgeons had supplied him, and which he begged Herbert to administer as soon as his long story was ended. As soon as Herbert perceived that his friend was asleep, he summoned the servant to watch with his master the remainder of the night, and returned to Nora. She, too, had passed a sleepless night; and in the repetition of Russell’s story to her, the remainder of the night was consumed.

When Russell awoke the next morning he made his servant throw wide the shutters and draw back the curtains, letting in a flood of sunshine with the fresh morning air. Intently he looked around the chamber, which seemed to him at once so strange and so familiar—so well known in its aspects, but so strange for him to behold them after the lapse of years.

It was precisely as he had left it—the same high bed, with its snowy counterpane and white canopy of striped muslin looped with blue ribbons; the same old furniture of rich, dark mahogany, the tall deep wardrobe, the high bureau with its feet of carved beast’s paws and its narrow mirror, and the washstand with its same old toilet service of white and blue china; the chairs and lounge with their summer covers of white linen bound with blue; the same pictures on the wall, steel engravings yellow with age and water-color paintings faded by the suns of many summers; even the same mantel ornaments, urn-shaped vases, old-fashioned candlesticks, and the Indian relics he and Herbert had picked up along the Chickahominy so long ago.

Mighty is the power of association. The sight of these familiar objects revived something of the feelings of boyhood and early youth. A sense of security and peace and a buoyancy of spirit, such as he had not known for years, momentarily suffused his soul.

He looked out upon the lawn, where the grand old trees, as yet but half clothed in their new garments of vivid green, threw soft shadows upon the smooth, sunlit turf. Then his eye wandered to the garden, where the flowers were blooming in the boundless profusion of the blossoming May.

Among the graceful branches of a cork-elm near one window a mocking-bird was carolling its morning song; and amid the blossoming sprays of a honeysuckle that wreathed another casement, a humming-bird was darting to and fro, its rainbow-tinted foliage flashing in the sunlight.

For a moment, the chequered years of manhood faded from his memory, and he was a boy again. He even forgot that he had been pierced with a mortal wound, and that his eyes must soon close on all this brightness and beauty forever, so happy was he in the reflection of past joy.

Herbert came in to bring him an iced mint julep and to inquire what he would have for breakfast. Lovingly, cheerfully they talked together about that far-away past before crime and grief had come to darken their happy lives; and Russell seemed so bright and strong that Herbert could but hope his wound was not as serious as had been supposed.

When her husband told her how composed and comfortable their guest appeared after the night's rest, Nora thought it would be a good time for their first meeting, which must prove trying to both. So taking little Nora by the hand, she went to Russell's room.

She wore her usual summer morning dress, a white wrapper confined at the waist with a black ribbon belt. A dainty frill encircled her graceful neck, and at her throat was a small cluster of pink roses her little daughter had fastened there.

Her chestnut hair waved as bright and beautiful as ever over her smooth brow; and her blue eyes had lost nothing of their clearness and sweetness, though the lids drooped languidly this morning. Her face, too, was pale, though as calm and as chastely beautiful as a moon-lit lake.

The spell of the past was still upon Russell, and when his eye fell upon her it lighted up with something of its pristine brightness, while his cheek flushed almost to the hue of health.

With just the slightest twitching of the lip, and the faintest quivering of the eyelids to betray her inward agitation, she approached the bed, took his proffered hand in hers, and bending over kissed his brow, saying,

"You cannot think, dear Russell, how glad Herbert and I are that you came to us when wounded, and so gave us the opportunity of ministering to your comfort. And I cannot express our sorrow at your suffering condition. I hope, though, that your wound may not prove dangerous, and that we may be able soon to nurse you back to health."

"Thank you!" he said. "If I had not felt quite sure of your kind welcome, I would not have come to you. Nor would I have come here to trouble you and Herbert with a revival of the painful past, if I had not felt that my days are numbered. It is beyond the power of human kindness or skill to heal my hurt. But this does not grieve me. I have many a time felt the burden of life to be greater than I could bear; and no man ever laid it down more cheerfully than I do."

"And yet," she said, "with all that you have suffered since we were so happy together, you have known great prosperity and some precious blessings. I cannot tell you how it rejoiced me to hear this—what an inexpressible consolation it is to me that you have had the fond love and sweet companionship of a good and lovely wife, have shared the bliss of a happy marriage and known the holy joys of paternity."

"Yes," he answered, "my life has not been all shadow. There are two angels waiting for me in heaven. And my dear mother, too, I hope soon to meet—she was a good woman, though not over wise. You and Bertie and your dear children will be gathered there ere many years. And there we may all hope to find that perfect and lasting happiness which we so vainly seek and pine for in this world."

Tears were rolling down her cheeks and trembling on his eyelids. Dashing them off, he held out his hands to little Nora, who stood silent and wondering beside her mother holding tightly to the beautiful bouquet she had gathered and arranged for Col. Trevelyan.

"Come, pretty one," he said, "and tell me where you have been and

what you have been doing during all the long year since I saw you at Brantley. Tell me, too, about sister Lucy and brother Herbert, and whether he ever got that sword he wanted to fight the Yankees with."

She went to him at once, sat on the bed beside him, and began to prattle in response to his questions, telling him first that Lucy and Herbert had gone away with aunt Lucy and uncle William to get out of the way of the Yankees; but that she had stayed with father and mother, and did not feel a bit afraid of the Yankees. She did not believe that the Yankees would hurt a little girl; for how would they like for people to go to their country and hurt their little girls?

Russell told his friends that he wished to preserve his incognito, and requested that none of their servants who would be likely to recognize him might be placed about him. This excluded Tom, to his great chagrin; for remembering the colonel's generosity on a former occasion, he had hoped to reap a golden harvest by his devoted attention.

On the second day after his arrival at Ingleside, the officer got Herbert to dispatch a messenger for a lawyer, who, having moved to the country soon after Russell Thornton's flight from it, had never seen that individual. To this gentleman, he dictated his last will and testament, and he gave him also an inventory of his property, together with the address of his agents in California and Texas.

When his will was executed and his business matters settled to his satisfaction, he seemed to relinquish all interest in life and calmly resigned himself to the death which he believed to be so near. To Herbert he gave directions for his interment.

"Bury me at Brantley," he said, "as near as possible to my father and mother. There will be no difficulty, I know; for Dashiell and his wife would never refuse such a request from a dying soldier. That I had visited the spot when passing through the country, admired it and desired to be buried there, will be sufficient explanation to them.

"And place on my tombstone the name I have borne for the last fourteen years. Although it could not hurt me to disclose my identity when I am no more, yet it would revive all the fearful story which once convulsed this community, bringing it with indelible force before the minds of the young generation just growing up, who have never yet heard it, or if they have, could not feel much interest in a tale concerning people long since dead.

"Besides, I wish to have above my ashes the untarnished name of Robert Trevelyan, a name that can never recall to the mind of any who may read it there one unworthy or debasing act."

The young physician, although he came daily to see the wounded officer, could do nothing for him but administer anodynes and stimulants. These kept him most of the time in a stupor. Occasionally he would be fully conscious and free from pain, when he seemed greatly to enjoy the society of his friends, would make inquiries about the condition and circumstances of his former neighbors and acquaintances, and discuss with interest the changes that had taken place in the community during his long absence from the State.

At such times, too, he would often send for little Nora to talk with him. She would sit on the bed beside him, and play with her dolls, read her little story books to him or sing for him the hymns she had learned at the Sunday school. Sometimes, too, she would bathe his forehead in cologne, as she had seen her mother do, or brush his hair and whiskers, twining the silvery curls around her fairy fingers.

Often when she sat thus, he would draw her to him, strain her to his heart and cover her rosy cheeks and shining hair with kisses. Nora, the Nora Wyndham he had loved, as the happy and loving wife of Herbert Lindsay, seemed very far away from him; but this child of hers, the mother's namesake and living image, seemed to him the same blithesome fairy that had so brightened his childhood, and whose fair image was blended with his happiest and most cherished memories.

For some days after the arrival of Col. Trevelyan at Ingleside, the whole country thereabout was kept in the greatest state of excitement and distress by the continual passing of troops—the pursuing Federals pressing close on the heels of the retreating Confederates, and the rattling fire of skirmishing telling daily of contact between the rear of the latter and the van of the former.

Then when the last column had passed out of sight, there settled upon the community a profound stillness, like the silence and hush after a tempest.

Herbert had tried to exclude the noise, confusion and other annoyances of the times as much as possible from the chamber of his guest; but in spite of his efforts, Russell had felt and suffered from it. Sweet indeed to all was the succeeding quiet. The wounded man's nerves became more composed, and he slept almost constantly.

But he did not revive. Every day and almost every hour he grew perceptibly weaker. Hæmorrhages from the sloughing of the wound reduced him so rapidly that the physician pronounced his end very near.

On the last day of his life, Herbert and Nora sat beside him the whole long summer day, watching his labored breathing, and trying to alleviate his sufferings, their lips often moving in silent prayer for the passing soul.

Just as the setting sun threw its parting rays over the white, rigid face, he breathed his last; and the shadows of night gathered with that of death over a countenance which the grieving watchers remembered as once radiant as the morning.

In the solemn stillness and gathering gloom of the death chamber, Nora fell on her knees beside the bed and wept convulsively.

Tenderly closing the large, dark eyes, from which the light had faded forever, Herbert solemnly repeated,

"And we know that the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin."

"I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

"Dearest," he said, gently raising Nora and leading her from the room, "let us look away from the shadows gathering around us here to the ineffable brightness of the eternal morning now dawning for him."

As they stood together over his coffin the next day, taking their last look at the white face so grandly beautiful in the statuesque repose of death, Nora said,

"Sometimes I wish that Russell had never come back to us after we had so entirely given him up and ceased to grieve for him, only to open up the old wounds and pierce our hearts afresh. Then again, I feel thankful that we have had the opportunity to help and comfort him and prove to him how much we have always pitied and loved him."

"Yes," said Herbert; "Surely it is worth all that we have suffered since he has been with us to know that by the faithful discharge of Chris-

tian duty through so many years of useful and honorable life, he has so far atoned for the great sin of his early years, and to see in his closing hours such abundant evidence of his entire preparation for the eternal life. When time shall have soothed our keen sorrow, I am sure we will remember him with more satisfaction and consolation than we have ever done."

Notices of the soldier's burial were sent far and near; and so ardent was the patriotism of the community, so great the respect, admiration and sympathy for the Confederate soldier, that a long procession followed the officer's remains along the quiet country roads, between the green fields and through the leafy woods that had once been so well known and so dear to the dead man.

So great was the sympathy felt for the soldier dying away from home and friends, that many tears were shed around the grave, where amid the brightness, bloom and verdure of a lovely summer day, they laid him to sleep his last sleep.

The burial services concluded with the singing of a hymn, "Rock of Ages." Sweetly the strains arose from that green hill top and floated down the valley, borne on and on by the wandering wind over the places which long ago had echoed with the merry songs of the silent sleeper. Then, as this died away, the booming of distant cannon broke on the summer air, seeming a parting salute to the gallant spirit that had fought its last battle.

Deeply affected as the spectators were by the touching circumstances of the soldier's death and the solemn services of his burial, they could but wonder at the profound grief manifested by the minister and his wife.

"Had he been an intimate friend or a near relative," some of them observed, "Mr. and Mrs. Lindsay could not have been more deeply distressed. His voice trembled so that he could scarcely conduct the services, and her form quivered with suppressed emotion. Poor fellow! he must have been a most attractive man to gain such a place in their affections in so short a time."

But the public wonder was still greater when it became known sometime after that the strange officer who had died at Ingleside, had bequeathed a large fortune to the Lindsays—one-half of which was devised to Rev. Herbert Lindsay and his wife, and the other half to their youngest daughter, Leonora Wyndham.

1. The first part of the paper is devoted to the study of the properties of the function  $f(x)$  defined by the equation

$$f(x) = \int_0^x \frac{1}{1+t^2} dt$$

It is shown that the function  $f(x)$  is increasing and concave down on the interval  $(-\infty, \infty)$ . The maximum value of the function is  $\frac{\pi}{2}$  and the minimum value is  $-\frac{\pi}{2}$ .

2. The second part of the paper is devoted to the study of the properties of the function  $g(x)$  defined by the equation

$$g(x) = \int_0^x \frac{1}{1+t^4} dt$$

It is shown that the function  $g(x)$  is increasing and concave down on the interval  $(-\infty, \infty)$ . The maximum value of the function is  $\frac{\pi}{4}$  and the minimum value is  $-\frac{\pi}{4}$ .











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